

ENTERING INTO GOD'S STORY:
RECOVERING THE GRAND NARRATIVE AND FINDING OURSELVES IN GOD'S
STORY

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DAVID BONJOON KOO

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Contents

List of Figures	v
Acknowledgements	vi
Abstract	vii
Introduction.....	8
Chapter 1: The Problem and Its Setting	12
Pre-Modern Worldview	13
Modern Worldview.....	16
Postmodern Worldview.....	19
Case Study: 2 nd Generation Korean-American Christians	26
Confucius and the Lure of the “Good” Life	34
Chapter 2: Theological Framework	37
The First Element of the Framework: Metanarrative Framework	37
The Second Element of the Framework: Covenantal Framework	45
The Third Element of the Framework: Living from the Heart	51
Conclusion	58
Chapter 3: Literature Review	62
The Postmodern Context.....	66
Asian-American Context in Particular	78
Themes in the Culture	80
Scriptural Tradition	83

Experience of Other Local Churches	84
Conclusion	89
Chapter 4: Project Design.....	90
Why Are We Teaching?	90
What Are We Teaching?	92
When Are We Introducing This?	93
Whom Are We Teaching?	94
How Are We Teaching?	95
Where Are We Teaching?	95
Who Is Teaching?.....	95
Chapter 5: Entering Into God’s Story: Three Day Retreat.....	97
Presentation I	97
Finding Ourselves in the Story.....	97
Presentation II	103
Lesslie Newbigin’s Experience as a Paradigm Shifting Experience	103
What Happened? How Did We Get Where We Are?	105
Confucius and the Lure of the “Good” Life	117
Presentation III: Content.....	121
The Beginning Point: Theirs and Ours.	121
Creation	124
Our Relationship to God	127
The Fall.....	129
Redemption	136

Purpose Remained the Same	137
Presentation IV	139
How Do We Get In on the Story	139
Adam and Eve	143
Abraham	145
Israel	147
Jesus and the Cross.....	149
Consummation	155
Chapter 6: Reflection.....	157
Bibliography	160
VITA	163

Figures

Figure 1 - Pre-modern Worldview	14
Figure 2 - Modern Worldview	17
Figure 3 – Postmodern Worldview	21
Figure 4 – Comparison of Asian and Western Cultural Values	29
Figure 5 – Smorgasbord of Worldviews	32
Figure 6 – History, Identity and Destiny	41
Figure 7 – God’s Big Picture.....	43
Figure 8 – Shape of the Hebrew Bible	44
Figure 9 – Components of God’s Covenant: Past, Present and Future	47
Figure 10 – God’s Provision and Our Response.....	47
Figure 11 – God’s Character Transforms Our Faith in God in the Past to Hope in God in Our Future	48
Figure 12 – Faith and Hope Make Love Possible	49
Figure 13 – Faith, Hope and Love as Covenant Stipulation	50
Figure 14 – Faith, Hope and Love: Covenant Framework	51
Figure 15 – From the Heart Action Springs	54
Figure 16 – The Word and the Spirit Evoke Faith in Christ.....	58
Figure 17 – God’s Big Picture.....	59
Figure 18 – The Word and the Spirit Evoke Faith in Christ.....	60
Figure 19 – Faith, Hope and Love: Covenantal Framework.....	61
Figure 20 – Common Outreach Model.....	62
Figure 21 – Contextual Model: Listening Stage	64
Figure 22 – Contextual Model	66
Figure 23 – Schedule for Three Day Retreat.....	94
Figure 24 – Comparison of Asian and Western Cultural Values	113
Figure 25 – Smorgasbord of Worldviews	115
Figure 26 – Humanity’s Relationship to God and to the World	128
Figure 27 – Relationships Broken through Serpent’s Subversion	131
Figure 28 – God’s Covenantal Relationship with Adam and Eve	143
Figure 29 – God’s Covenantal Relationship with Abraham	145
Figure 30 – God’s Covenantal Relationship with Israel	147
Figure 31 – God’s Covenantal Relationship with Christians	149
Figure 32 – Components of God’s Covenant: Past, Present and Future	150
Figure 33 – God’s Provision and Our Response.....	150
Figure 34 – God’s Character Transforms Our Faith in God in the Past to Hope in God in Our Future	151
Figure 35 – Faith and Hope Make Love Possible	152
Figure 36 – Faith, Hope and Love as Covenant Stipulation	153
Figure 37 – Faith, Hope and Love: Covenant Framework	154

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Abstract

Entering into God's Story:

Recovering the Grand Narrative and Finding Ourselves in God's Story

This work is a study focused on recovering the grand narrative of the Christian Scripture and recognizing that Christians are more than spectators of this grand narrative but are called to be participants in it.

A primary premise of the work is that the reason for the "Silent Exodus" that many Korean-American churches are currently experiencing shares remarkable similarities with postmodern emphasis on rejection of any metanarrative. The author suggests that this rejection of metanarrative is partly responsible for the "Silent Exodus." Hence, this work seeks to draw a rudimentary "map" of the function of metanarrative in the life of a believer to recover and reverse this trend.

Introduction

David Naugle in his seminal book, *Worldview: The History of a Concept*, makes an eye opening statement, "...human life is governed by story. The roles which people play, how they understand themselves and others, how the world itself is structured and operates are a function of the narrative plots that reign in a human community."¹ He shows, however, that this is not a novel idea,

...Socrates and Plato, and later on even Aristotle, recognized the importance of the narrative education of the young, as fairy-tale expert Bruno Bettelheim explains: 'Plato – who may have understood better what forms the mind of man than do some of our contemporaries who want their children exposed only to 'real' people and everyday events – knew what intellectual experiences make for true humanity. ... Thus the wisdom of the ages, going all the way back to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, would suggest that the development of the human mind and consciousness is a function of the weightiness of stories and their plots, their characters, their denouements, and their overall explanations of things.'²

Noted moral philosopher, Alasdair MacIntyre, not only recognized that one's life is shaped by story, but further believed that "a virtuous life is possible only to the extent that it is conceived, unified, and evaluated as a whole. ...grounded in the integrity of a narrative which links birth, life, and death, or beginning, middle, and end, into a singular, coherent story embraced communally."³ Naugle points out Alasdair MacIntyre's remarkable observation that in order for people to live virtuously they need to know what story they are part of. He writes,

¹ David Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), p. 301.

² Ibid., p. 297.

³ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 204-25, quoted in Ibid., p. 301.

...there is no way to give us an understanding of any society, including our own, except through the stock of stories which constitute its initial dramatic resources. Mythology, in its original sense, is at the heart of things.' In other words, the narrative stories which are lived out in the world of human experience are a product of bedrock, first-order myths that essentially constitute a worldview. MacIntyre's fundamental proposal essential to his revival of the Aristotelian tradition of virtue ethics is this: 'A central thesis then begins to emerge: man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal. He is not essentially, but becomes through his history, a teller of stories that aspire to truth. But the key question for men is not about their own authorship; I can only answer the question 'What am I to do' if I can answer the prior question 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?'⁴

Naugle goes on to show why this is so, from a surprising source – children, quoting Bettelheim, a noted fairy-tale expert:

Bettelheim has argued that fairy tales and myths are the basic means by which children fashion and refashion their worlds. This is largely true because, in his estimation, such tales and myths are concerned with basic questions of life: 'Who am I? Where did I come from? How did the world come into being? Who created man and all the animals? What is the purpose of life?' He is convinced, however, that children ponder these issues, not philosophically, but in a childlike way as they pertain to a specific boy or girl and his or her individual well-being. ... For Bettelheim, myths and fairy tales provide the answers to these pressing questions which children become aware of only as they are exposed to these stories and follow their plots all the way through. The answers given by myths are definite, says Bettelheim, while the responses of fairy tales are suggestive. The content of fairy tales, in particular, fit the nature of children and their childlike outlook on the world, and this is why they are so convincing to and comforting for them. They reflect and order their world.⁵

What Bettelheim states is that people, especially children, understand, make sense of their world and engage the world through stories, myths and narratives. And these stories, myths and narratives form a person's worldview. But what happens to people when they are stripped of their story - the story that provides the answers to

⁴ Ibid., p. 301.

⁵ Bruno Bettelheim, *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales* (New York: Random House, Vintage Books, 1977), p. 35 quoted in Ibid., p. 297-298.

these pressing questions? What happens when people no longer know what story they are part of? And particularly for Christians, what happens when there is no recognition that they are part, not just as readers and spectators but as active participants, of the overarching, grand narrative and the drama of the Bible. If what Rollo May affirms is true, that “Myths are narrative patterns that give significance to our existence,”⁶ or as Linda Degh asserts, “Narratives, in particular, are loaded with worldview expressions: they reveal inherited communal and personal views of human conduct,”⁷ what happens when people no longer recognize that they are part of a larger story?

This concern is reflected in Robert Webber’s recent challenge in his “A Call to an Ancient Evangelical Future,”

Today, we call evangelicals to turn away from modern theological methods that reduce the gospel to mere propositions, and from contemporary pastoral ministries so compatible with culture that they camouflage God’s story or empty it of its cosmic and redemptive meaning. In a world of competing stories, we call evangelicals to recover the truth of God’s Word as the story of the world, and to make it the centerpiece of evangelical life.⁸

The purpose of this project is to take seriously the challenge of Robert Webber’s call and to show that Alasdair MacIntyre’s thesis that “people can only answer the question ‘What am I to do’ if they can answer the prior question ‘Of what story or stories do I find myself a part,’” not only applies in the realm of Aristotelian virtues but in living the Christian life as well. The aim of this project is first, to show that the current problem many 2nd generation Korean-American churches are facing, aptly labeled “a

⁶ Rollo May, *The Cry for Myth* (New York: Bantam Doubleday Dell, Delta, 1991), p. 15, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 298.

⁷ Linda Degh, “The Approach to Worldview in Folk Narrative Study,” *Western Folklore* 53 (July 1994): 246, quoted in *Ibid.*, p. 299.

⁸ Robert E. Webber, “A Call to an Ancient Evangelical Future” published on christianitytoday.com at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2006/september/11.57.html>.

Silent Exodus”⁹ shares remarkable similarities with the “denarrativization”¹⁰ of the current postmodern context. Second, the project proposes that one of the effective means to remedy these problems, first in 2nd generation Korean-American churches and second in larger postmodern context, is to encourage local churches to recover the narrative nature of the Christian faith. This project includes the design for a presentation in a three day retreat setting intended for small groups within a local church setting and for pastors with an aim of recovering the narrative nature of the Christian faith.

⁹ Helen Lee, “Can the East Asian church in America reverse the flight of its next generation?” published on ctlibrary.com at <http://ctlibrary.com/537>.

¹⁰ David Naugle, p. 299.

Chapter 1: The Problem and Its Setting

James M. Houston, professor Emeritus of Spiritual Theology at Regent College, states in his book, *I believe in the Creator*, “We are always experiencing two landscapes at the same time: the landscape before our eyes – the phenomenal world – and the landscape in our minds, what the Poet Gerald Manley Hopkins has called ‘inscape.’”¹¹

He writes,

The world we see is the mirror image of our hearts. We perceive reality as we conceive it to be. If we have given up hope of finding meaning in our lives, then we see the world as a desert, a threatening wilderness. If, however, we have hope in God the Creator of all things, then we can, and shall, see it very differently.¹²

While one can agree with Houston that one’s inward vision of the world shapes how a person looks at this world and further can agree with him that one’s vision of who God is must shape how one ought to live, one also needs to recognize that people are, to a large degree, profoundly affected by the landscape around them. Hence, in order to understand the persons that one is called to minister to, it is important if not imperative to examine the setting, the landscape or the context in which that ministry takes place. As one examines the context in which to minister, it will equip one to better understand the persons one is called to minister.

Recent preoccupation with postmodernism arises from this awareness of the importance of understanding the context in which the gospel is proclaimed. In their attempt to understand the culture, many communicators of the gospel are keeping a

¹¹ James M. Houston, *I believe in the Creator* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1980), p. 15.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

close watch on what many social observers recognize – that our society and culture has undergone a massive shift – a change from what the social observers have labeled “modernity” to “postmodern” times.¹³ The Late Stanley J. Grenz, a prolific writer and former professor of theology and ethics at Regent College, writes,

Many social observers agree that the Western world is in the midst of change. In fact, we are apparently experiencing a cultural shift that rivals the innovations that marked the birth of modernity out of the decay of the Middle Ages: we are in the midst of a transition from the modern to the postmodern era.¹⁴

What does the “postmodern” landscape look like? Grenz observes that, whatever else, one must recognize that *postmodern* is a way of thinking and viewing reality that has rejected the modern worldview to move beyond modernism.¹⁵

As one examines this move from modernism to postmodernism, however, one of the helpful ways of explaining the postmodern landscape is to look first at the whole picture beginning with the move from pre-modern to modern and from modern to postmodern mindset.¹⁶

Pre-Modern Worldview

One of the significant elements that characterized the pre-modern era was the belief that “an omnipotent, omniscient God had created the entire universe and the

¹³ See Gene Edward Veith, *Postmodern Times* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Publishing Co., 1994); Stanley Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996); J. Richard Middleton & Brian J. Walsh, *Truth is Stranger than It Used to be* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1995); Millard J. Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House Co., 1998); D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996).

¹⁴ Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), pp. 2-8.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁶ Millard J. Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith: Evangelical Responses to the Challenge of Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House, 1998), pp. 15-20.

human race, and had a plan he was bringing about.”¹⁷ To put it simply, people knew – whether they personally believed or not – that God was at the very center of everything and that everything else radiated from this center. God was the one giving meaning, purpose and significance to everything else.¹⁸ Millard Erickson, in his book *Postmodernizing the Faith*, writes,

The premodern understanding of reality was teleological. There was believed to be a purpose or purposes in the universe, within which humans fit and were to be understood. This purpose was being worked out within the world. In the Western tradition, this was the belief that an omnipotent, omniscient God had created the entire universe and the human race, and had a plan he was bringing about.¹⁹

This can be diagrammed as follows (figure 1):

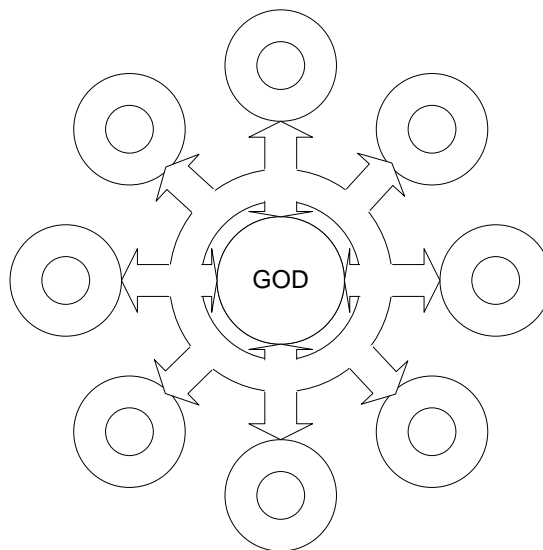


Figure 1 - Pre-modern Worldview

The Pre-modern worldview is helpfully summarized by James Sire:²⁰

- 1) God is infinite and personal (triune), transcendent and immanent, omniscient, sovereign and good

¹⁷ Ibid., p. 15.

¹⁸ James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1997), pp. 21-38.

¹⁹ Millard Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith*, p. 15.

²⁰ Op. Cit., pp. 25-44.

- 2) God created the cosmos *ex nihilo* (out of nothing) to operate with a uniformity of cause and effect in an open system
- 3) Human beings are created in the image of God and thus possess personality, self-transcendence, intelligence, morality, gregariousness and creativity
- 4) Human beings can know both the world around them and God himself because God has built into them the capacity to do so and because he takes an active role in communicating with them
- 5) Human beings were created good, but through the Fall the image of God became defaced, though not so ruined as not to be capable of restoration; through the work of Christ, God redeemed humanity and began the process of restoring people to goodness, though any given person may choose to reject that redemption
- 6) For each person death is either the gate to life with God and his people or the gate to eternal separation from the only thing that will ultimately fulfill human aspirations
- 7) Ethics is transcendent and is based on the character of God as good (holy and loving)
- 8) History is linear, a meaningful sequence of events leading to the fulfillment of God's purposes for humanity

Before moving from pre-modern worldview to modern worldview, it is important to remember one of James Sire's valuable observations,

Christianity had so penetrated the Western world that whether or not people believed in Christ or acted as Christians should, they all lived in a context of ideas influenced and informed by the Christian faith. Even those who rejected the faith often lived in the fear of hellfire or the pangs of purgatory. Bad people may have rejected Christian goodness, but they knew themselves to be bad by basically Christian standards – crudely understood, no doubt, but Christian in essence.²¹

What James Sire is pointing out is that whether people personally believed in Christianity or not there was a shared worldview – a shared narrative. There was a dominant worldview and a narrative that shaped how people thought, acted and lived. Even when people did not personally believe in Christianity, they lived in light of shared, distinctly a Christian, meta-narrative.

²¹ Ibid., p. 24.

Modern Worldview

Pre-modern worldview was supplanted with the rise of Modernism. With the help of naturalism and scientific method, humanism and rationalism of the Enlightenment project, Modernism sought to replace God who was at the center with the humanity as its new core. David Wells gives us a description of this process, worth quoting in entirety:

Clearly the Enlightenment promised far more than it was ever to deliver; one way of understanding this is to think of it as a Christian heresy. What Christian faith had offered was retained while the Source from which that offer had been made was rejected. The prerogatives that had belonged to God did not simply disappear; now they reappeared in human beings. The revelation he had given now reappeared in the form of natural reason, which would do what revelation had done but without the discomfort of requiring humanity to submit to the God from whom the revelation had come; the idea of salvation was retained but transformed into the drive for human perfectability, at first achieved by moral striving and then, as we know it today, by psychological technique; grace became effort; the life of faith became the hope of personal growth; and eschatology became progress (what Lord Acton called the religion of those who have none). Thus was the Christian Trinity replaced by a substitute trinity of reason, nature, and progress.²²

This can be diagrammed as follows (figure 2):

²² David Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow'rs* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), pp. 30-31.

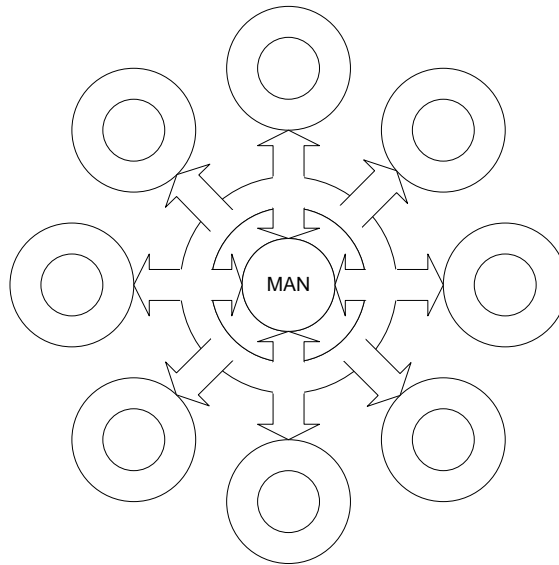


Figure 2 - Modern Worldview

Modernism declared that the human being is the measure of all things.

Humanity, with reason as its supreme guide and progress as its goal, was to fill the role of God, giving meaning and significance to everything. There was a tremendous belief in the power of human reason and human progress, that humanity was able to bring about a Utopia – a heaven on earth and this without ever relying on “God.” God was dead; at least he was no longer needed. Ultimately, however, Modernism could not deliver what it promised. The utopia that it promised did not come. Rather than progress, there came destruction, violence, horror and death through two world wars. Promising beyond what it can deliver, David Wells writes that modernism actually “sowed its own downfall”:

The place God had occupied was now occupied by the human being. Meaning and morality, which only God could give, were taken to be purely human accomplishments; but in promising what only God could do, the Enlightenment sowed the seeds of its own downfall. It promised too much. It promised, in fact, that all human problems could be solved by purely natural means – and that, plainly, rested on false assumptions. It both underestimated the magnitude of

the problems and overestimated the capacity of human nature to remedy them.²³

Having sown its own downfall, modernism was overtaken by postmodernism.

Further, David Naugle writes, modernism sowed another seed of postmodernism to its own downfall – denarrativization. He describes denarrativization of modernism,

Thus, from Plato to the present, the human relevance of the narrative genre with life-defining power seems self-evident. Yet despite this all-time, all places recognition of stories as the bearers of a symbolic world in which human beings might find a secure, cognitive home – what Stephen Crites has called the ‘narrative quality of experience’ – the architects of the modern project did their best to rid *homo narrator* of their troublesome tales and banish them from cultural significance. Because the sociocultural conflict, and even warfare, especially of the religious variety, their solution was to exterminate the narrative-infested polis and fill it with ratio-scientific objectifications. Relegating the category of narrative to private life and the domain of values, their goal was to provide an allegedly neutral and hostility-free way of ordering public life. Human existence established upon a new, scientific foundation betokened modern man come of age, who no longer had need for the primitive mythologies of bygone religious or metaphysical era.²⁴

Naugle states that “Enlightenment denarrativization came at a high human cost.”²⁵ He writes that no one understood the consequence of this denarrativization better than the prophet of postmodernism, Friedrich Nietzsche, “In *The Birth of Tragedy* he writes, ‘But without myth every culture loses the healthy natural power of its creativity: only a horizon defined by myths completes and unifies a whole cultural movement.’”²⁶

Naugle describes the consequences of denarrativization that modernity brought on itself, “modern humanity, ‘untutored by myth,’ is famished and in search for any

²³ Ibid., p. 31.

²⁴ David Naugle, p. 299.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 299.

²⁶ Ibid., pp. 299-300.

narrative morsel on which to feed itself, as the frenzied activities and compulsions of contemporary life indicate.”²⁷ However, what must be kept in mind is that the full impact of denarrativization will not be felt until modernism gives way to the rise of post-modernism. There is still in modernism, at least in the Western mindset, a uniformity of a shared worldview – a Christian heresy called modernism. But with its empty promises, modernism cannot withstand the rise of postmodernism.

Postmodern Worldview

With the rise of postmodernism, there is a firm belief that modernism with humanity as its center has failed. But in a remarkable twist of events, postmodernism does not reject autonomous self as the center as modernism did with God at the center. What postmodernism does reject, however, is any kinds of inherited metanarrative – an overarching framework, a big-story, “those overarching structures of meaning, derived by unaided reason, which enabled people to interpret life as a whole and to see the connections of its parts and where it was all heading in its progress away from darkness and ignorance”²⁸ – that tries to make sense of the world which the self inhabits. Indeed, David Wells points out that the death of modernity has been greatly exaggerated, he states, “...modernity and postmodernity are actually reflecting different aspects of our modernized culture. They are more like siblings in the same family than rival gangs in the same neighborhood.”²⁹ He further states,

Throughout the West, it is now apparent that there is a major shift in mood and outlook taking place. It is doubtful that this shift is deep enough, and decisive

²⁷ Ibid., p. 300.

²⁸ David Wells, *Above All Earthly Powers*, p. 74.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 62.

enough, to have established a clean breach with modernity and hence to inaugurate a new cultural phase we can call *postmodernity*, even though I do use the word. Harvey has concluded, I believe with justification, “that there is much more continuity than difference between the broad history of modernism and the movement of postmodernism.”³⁰

David Wells writes that there is an important “threads of continuity between modernity and postmodernity and not least among these is the fact at the center of both is the autonomous self.”³¹ What is different, however, is how this is manifested,

During the Enlightenment, this was worked out in anti-religious ways, the Enlightenment thinkers refusing to be fettered by any transcendent being or any authority outside of themselves. In postmodernity, the autonomous being refuses to be fettered by any objective reality outside of itself. In the end, the difference is simply that the revolt in the first case took a more religious turn and in the second a more general turn.³²

According to Wells, what is rejected is not the autonomous self, as some have observed, but the overarching metanarrative that “enabled people to have a perspective on life within which questions of meaning were grasped, and typically this perspective rested on a belief in the existence of truth and universal kind, unrevealed though it was. All of that has now collapsed.”³³ Wells further notes, citing David Naugle, “And in its place has arisen the view that individuals...should ‘set themselves up autonomously as the acknowledged legislators of the world’ and now ‘they claim an essentially divine prerogative to conceptualize reality and shape the nature of life as they please.’”³⁴ What comes to the fore is a very grim picture.

What has replaced the worldviews that once sought to encompass the whole of existence in their understanding are now privatized worldviews, worldviews that

³⁰ Ibid., p. 66-67.

³¹ Ibid., p. 67-68.

³² Ibid., p. 68.

³³ Ibid., p. 74.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 74.

are valid for no one but the person whose world it is and whose view it is. They qualify as worldviews because postmoderns are still addressing questions about what is ultimate (the answer is nothing) about the meaning of the universe (the answer is that it has none) and about human experience.³⁵

This can be diagrammed as pictured in Figure 3 below:

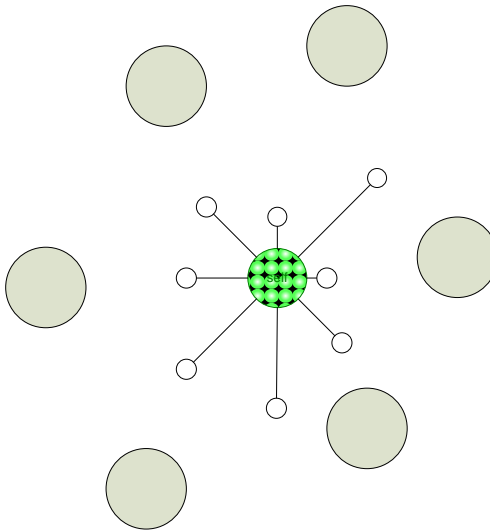


Figure 3 – Postmodern Worldview

Along with this declaration come certain consequences:

- 1) The objectivity of knowledge is denied and uncertain – since there is no longer any universal center that will provide this “objectivity,”
- 2) All-inclusive systems of explanation is rejected,
- 3) The inherent goodness of knowledge is questioned – since there is no way of knowing,
- 4) Individual knower who knows for certain is also rejected – replaced by communities arbitrating what is “truth,”
- 5) Scientific objectivity is called into question and relativity embraced.³⁶

So then, how does a postmodern person navigate through the world? David

Wells points out a surprising answer. He writes that armed with choice as their only

³⁵ Ibid., p. 74.

³⁶ Millard J. Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith*, pp. 18-19.

tool, the postmoderns set out to construct their own reality and meaning for themselves.³⁷ As he notes in this insightful paragraph:

The reality is that modern consumption is not simply about shopping because what we are buying is not simply goods and services. Modern consumption is about buying *meaning* for ourselves. It is about the way we construct ourselves, the vantage point from which we want to look at the world. It is, therefore, becoming the defining focus of a new kind of civilization. What was once just a matter of producing goods has become a way of producing culture and meaning, for what we consume has merged into what provides us with our meaning. The road to this meaning, however, is reached only by a path that runs through a valley of choice so diverse and so multilayered that it is easy to become lost.³⁸

The postmodern person, then, is a person that has burned all the bridges that connect him or her to everything else. All the characteristics of postmodern culture seem to point to this. The postmodern person is a person who does not recognize that God must be at the center. Instead there is a radical suspicion of anything that will attempt to occupy the center, other than the atomized self. Further, the postmodern person is a person that has rejected any form of metanarrative. Burned by unfulfilled promises made by modernism, the postmodern person has rejected not only the modern metanarrative but is suspicious of all metanarratives. The postmodern person's experience with modernism has insured that anything that will attempt to occupy the center must be rejected on all fronts. Many postmoderns' experience of void, pain, thirst and hunger points to the fact that there is something so central to them is missing,³⁹ that they cannot see it. As Wells points out,

³⁷ David Wells, *Above All Earthly Powers*, pp. 67-90.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 77.

³⁹ Alister McGrath, *Unknown God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1999), pp. 7-11.

Postmoderns have set about upending the Enlightenment but, along the way, have created their own obstacles to being able to find meaning, and there is much in our consumer culture that militates against such a discovery, too. Where Descartes' skepticism stopped with his own self-consciousness, postmodern doubting has refused to stop anywhere... Thus has postmodern self-consciousness become deeply nomadic, ever moving and never stopping, but it is always movement without destination. It is without purpose.⁴⁰

Hence, postmodern's homeless wandering, Wells points out, has a surprising destination,

As our world has thus fallen in on us, stripping us of a worldview larger than our own perceptions, denying that we have access to what is true, and leaving us purposeless, so many people in the West are, perhaps surprisingly, now reaching out for what is spiritual. Today, the world in general is as 'furiously religious' as ever, Berger asserts, despite the tides of secularization that have swept over it.⁴¹

David Naugle agrees with this assessment, writing,

And now the mythless man stands eternally hungry, surrounded by all past ages, and digs and grubs for roots, even if he has to dig for them among the remotest antiquities. The tremendous historical need of our unsatisfied modern culture, the assembling around one of countless other cultures, the consuming desire for knowledge – what does all this point to, if not to the loss of myth, the loss of the mythical home, the mythical maternal womb?⁴²

What this analysis shows is that the postmodern landscape is marked by “a gravitational pull toward three simple affirmations: no (comprehensive) worldview, no truth, and no purpose,”⁴³ and ending up with incredible hunger for what is spiritual. What this analysis shows is that with modernism there was a shared metanarrative, but with postmodernism this is no longer true. With postmodernism, there is a wholesale rejection of any metanarrative. In fact, it was Lyotard, the famous postmodern

⁴⁰ David Wells, *Above All Earthly Powers*, p. 89.

⁴¹ Ibid., p. 89.

⁴² David Naugle, *Worldview*, p. 300.

⁴³ Op Cit., p. 90.

philosopher, who said, "Simplifying to the extreme, I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward metanarratives."⁴⁴ However, James K. A. Smith explains in his book, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?* that what Lyotard was rejecting was not metanarrative as in "big stories – grand, epic narratives that tell an overarching tale about the world."⁴⁵ But according to Smith, "What is at stake for Lyotard is not the scope of these narratives but the nature of the claims they make."⁴⁶ He explains, "For Lyotard, metanarratives are a distinctively modern phenomenon: they are stories that not only tell a grand story but also claim to be able to legitimate or prove the story's claim by an appeal to universal reason."⁴⁷ What Smith writes is that Lyotard was not rejecting metanarrative itself but the metanarrative of modernism. He further explains,

In particular, we must note that the postmodern critique is not aimed at metanarratives because they are really grounded in narratives; on the contrary, the problem with metanarratives is that they do not own up to their own mythic ground. Postmodernism is not incredulity toward narrative or myth; on the contrary, it unveils that all knowledge is grounded in such.⁴⁸

What James K. A. Smith goes at length to explain is that what Lyotard was rejecting was not a biblical or premodern notion of metanarrative but the modern forgery of biblical metanarrative thus leaving the back door open for genuine Christian engagement. Nevertheless, there is no escape that in the postmodern landscape there is a whole-sale rejection of metanarrative going on, if not a deep suspicion toward any metanarrative.

⁴⁴ Jean-Francois Lyotard, quoted in James K. A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism?* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2006), p. 63.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 64.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 64.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 65.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 69.

With postmodernism, what one can see is that for the first time, there is no shared metanarrative. What results is each individual creating and constructing their own narrative that will give meaning and purpose to their lives. And armed with pick and choose spirituality, what results can only be alarming to Christians. D. A. Carson writes,

The more that people try to pick and choose elements of fundamental disparate religions in order to construct some sort of syncretistic concoction, the more vindicated is the postmodern penchant for disallowing the link between any person's claims to knowledge and reality itself. Conversely, the more such links are disallowed, the easier it is to sanction syncretism. Indeed, failure to be syncretistic may appear old-fashioned, narrow, and epistemologically straitjacketed.⁴⁹

In conclusion, the picture that emerges is something like this: postmodern persons are characterized by no (comprehensive) worldview, no truth and no purpose, having thrown off the shackles of any metanarrative. But they are searching intensely for what is spiritual. They are armed with pragmatism and the power of choice to pick and choose from the smorgasbord of spiritualities, mixing and matching as they see fit. But what needs to be added is that there cannot be an absence of worldviews or metanarratives, nor can there be equality between conflicting metanarratives. As the framers of "A Call to an Ancient Evangelical Future" make clear, "the pressing question is: Who gets to narrate the world?"⁵⁰ The following case study of 2nd generation Korean Americans will make this clear.

⁴⁹ D. A. Carson, *Becoming Conversant with the Emerging Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 2005), p. 98.

⁵⁰ Robert Webber and Phil Kenyon, "A Call to an Ancient Evangelical Future" published on christianitytoday.com at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/go/aefcall>.

Case Study: 2nd Generation Korean-American Christians

An eye opening experience was relayed by Lesslie Newbigin, who served for nearly forty years as a missionary in India,

When I was a young missionary I used to spend one evening each week in the monastery of the Ramakrishna Mission in the town where I lived, sitting on the floor with the monks and studying with them the Upanishads and the Gospels. In the great hall of the monastery, as in all the premises of the Ramakrishna Mission, there is a gallery of portraits of the great religious teachers of humankind. Among them, of course, is a portrait of Jesus. Each year on Christmas Day worship was offered before this picture. Jesus was honored, worshipped, as one of the many manifestations of deity in the course of human history. To me, as a foreign missionary, it was obvious that this was not a step toward the conversion of India. It was the cooption of Jesus into the Hindu worldview. Jesus had become just one figure in the endless cycle of *karma* and *samsara*, the wheel of being in which we are all caught up. He had been domesticated into the Hindu worldview. That view remained unchallenged. It was only slowly, through many experiences, that I began to see that something of this domestication had taken place in my own Christianity, that I too had been more ready to seek a “reasonable Christianity,” a Christianity that could be defended on the terms of my whole intellectual formation as a twentieth-century Englishman, rather than something which placed my whole intellectual formation under a new and critical light. I, too, had been guilty of domesticating the gospel.⁵¹

This deep and honest insight from a veteran missionary, working in a cross-cultural context, is most helpful in examining one’s context of ministry, and for this project, Korean-Christianity in particular.

The question that one needs to ask is, “Does something like what Newbigin experienced, the cooption of Jesus into the Hindu worldview, also happen in Korean Christianity?” The verdict, perhaps not surprisingly, is yes. This become clear when one examines Korean Christianity in a new light. “Why is it that picture of a businessman

⁵¹ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), p. 3.

inviting a local pastor to bless the start of his business look remarkably similar to a businessman of few decades earlier inviting a local shaman to come and bless the start of his business?” “What about the motivation behind all-night prayers, early morning prayers, and fasting prayers for which Korean Christians are so often praised and commended – especially in light of the fact that Koreans were already doing many of these practices, all-night prayers and thousand morning prayers – at Buddhist temples?”⁵² “Why translate the word ‘church’ as a ‘place of education’ in light of Confucian worldview’s high appreciation for education?” “The emphasis on honoring one’s parents: Is this from concern for teaching biblical commands or is it from Confucian roots? “If this concern for teaching the younger generation to honor one’s parents does stem from biblical roots, then why is there not as much emphasis on ‘not exasperating one’s children’?”

The assumption of this project is that there is evidence to support that in Korean contexts, Confucianism, which is the dominant worldview and a public narrative, co-opted the Christian worldview.⁵³ It has taken what is useful and already appreciated in Confucian worldview, such as appreciation for education and honoring one’s elders, while holding at bay what it feels is a threat to the existing Confucian worldview.

Further, what needs to be taken into account is that Korean Confucian worldview was already borne out of a pluralistic mindset. What many Christians in the

⁵² Of course, this statement is not to assert that all early morning prayers or all night prayers are wrong or flawed. Rather, the aim here is to examine or, at least, question the core motivation behind early morning prayers and all night prayers to see which narrative – Christian, Confucian, Buddhist or other – is at the core.

⁵³ Although there is a difference in academic definition between terms “worldview,” “myth,” and “metanarrative,” for the purpose of this paper, they will be treated as synonyms or as metonyms that stand in for the same concept.

West are experiencing in full force now in the form of postmodernism was already experienced. Perhaps it is more correct to say that the Eastern context never outgrew its pluralistic and syncretistic worldview. When Christianity arrived on the shores of Korea, Japan and China, the Eastern mindset or worldview was already pluralistic and already syncretistic – picking and choosing a private spirituality, another hallmark of postmodern spirituality.

Lesslie Newbigin's experience in India and a brief and impromptu analysis of Korean Christianity demonstrate one important understanding: even in a pluralistic context one dominant worldview or narrative is never absent; different worldviews do not co-exist without one dominant worldview changing the characteristics, however minute, of a weaker worldview. Bartholomew and Goheen, authors of the book, *The Drama of Scripture*, write,

No building can have more than one foundation. We can have no more than one *fundamental* story as the basis for what we think and how we act. Once you make one story part of another, the nature of the first as “basic” is destroyed. The whole point of a basic story or grand narrative is to make sense of life as a whole, and such grand narratives cannot easily be mixed up with each other. Basic stories are in principle *normative* – they define starting points, ways of seeing what is true – and they are *comprehensive*, since they give an account of *the whole*.⁵⁴

As Webber states so clearly, “...the church is confronted by a host of master narratives that contradict and compete with the gospel. The pressing question is: Who gets to narrate the world?”⁵⁵ This is important when one examines the context of 2nd generation Korean-American Christians in the North American context. Who narrates

⁵⁴ Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2004), p. 20.

⁵⁵ Robert Webber, “A Call to an Ancient Evangelical Future”

the 2nd generation Korean-American Christian context? Is it Confucianism? Is it Postmodernism? Or Is it host of other –isms that on a daily basis compete with the Christian worldview?

2nd generation Korean-American Christians are people caught in the middle. They are people caught between different ways of communication and different ways of social interaction. They are people caught between cultures, caught between different value systems, caught between two narratives. In order to see how different narratives are vying for their attention, it is important to take a closer look. Here is a helpful chart (figure 4) spelling out the different values:⁵⁶

<i>Asian Value: Situation Centered</i>	<i>Western Value: Individual Centered</i>
Collectivity⁵⁷	Individualism
Group Identity Achievement of goals by others Obligation to group	Autonomy Achievement of individual goals Trained to be individuals
Duty and Obligation	Rights and Privilege
Relational responsibility Duty to others Motivation based on obligation	Responsible to self Personal rights Motivation based on feelings
Hierarchy	Equality
Submissive to authority Emphasis on positions in relationships	Dislike for rules and control Play down superiority/inferiority

⁵⁶ Taken from Jeanette Yep Ed., *Following Jesus without Dishonoring Your Parents* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p. 13.

⁵⁷ One of the key elements, I believe, in understanding the difference between Korean culture and American culture is collectivism vs. individualism. I find that this difference in collectivism vs. individualism help explain a lot of other differences. For example when one understands the value orientation of individualism in America, it helps to understand why there is a strong emphasis on autonomy, responsibility of self and expression of self. In a similar way when one understands the value orientation of collectivism in Korean culture, it helps one understand why there is so much emphasis on duty, submission to authority and obligation to others. Understanding collectivism helps shed light on important concepts that 2KAs deal with such as the concept of shame, “saving face,” and “knowing one’s place.”

Accepts rules and propriety	Questions authority
Deference	Self-Assertion
Passivity and yieldedness Adherence to social politeness Emphasis on self effacement	Aggressive and expressive Assertive Open and accessible to others

Figure 4 – Comparison of Asian and Western Cultural Values

On top of this one can add different ways of communication that prefers indirectness to directness and group harmony over individual assertiveness.⁵⁸ 2nd generation Korean-Americans are people who find that they are neither comfortable as a Korean nor accepted as an American. This is especially evident in their church experience.

2nd generation Korean-American Christians find that they are not Korean-enough (usually not speaking or understanding the Korean language) to attend the 1st Generation Korean worship services and never American enough (looking like a Caucasian) to fully attend and participate in an “American” churches. No wonder some statistics find that Korean-Americans are leaving the churches at an alarming rate.⁵⁹

2nd Generation Korean-Americans find that their hearts are also caught in the middle. Being caught in the middle has its advantages. There are times when some expressions of the heart are much fuller in another language.⁶⁰ There is an advantage of looking at a particular problems or situation from more than one cultural perspective. There is also an advantage of being able to enjoy both cultures that one is part of. Nonetheless, being of two cultures also has its disadvantages such as not feeling truly at

⁵⁸ See Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993).

⁵⁹ Tom Lin, *Losing Face and Finding Grace* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1996), p. 10.

⁶⁰ I know this from personal experience using Korean language which is adjective rich, able to describe in exact detail in ways that English language cannot quite convey, and of course, vice-a-versa.

home in either of two cultures, struggling with one's identity, struggling just to fit in.

There are many traits that will describe these who are caught between cultures.

Many who are caught between cultures struggle with their identity.⁶¹ They just do not know who they are supposed to be. Many do not feel comfortable as a Korean or as an American. One author writes, "The cultures pull in opposite directions, and it is the soul of the Asian American that provides the rope for the tug of war."⁶² In the end, they opt for picking and choosing out of the smorgasbord (figure 5) of two worldviews creating their own private worldview – much like their postmodern counterpart.

Indeed, postmodern option is an alluring choice for people like 2nd generation Korean Americans who, while maintaining a strong tie to their dominant worldview whether it be 1st generation Confucianism or more Western 2nd generation worldview⁶³, can still dip into different options of ideas and outlook as their cultural or social landscape calls for it.

⁶¹ Tom Lin, pp. 7-8.

⁶² Philip Slater, *The Pursuit of Loneliness* cited in Jeanette Yep, *Following Jesus*, p. 13.

⁶³ It is interesting to note, however, that depending on one's cultural leaning whether they are more Asian or Western, they will choose to be postmodern but tempered by their cultural leaning. For example, a person more comfortable with Asian culture will choose to be postmodern yet "situation centered" (see figure 4) while a person more comfortable with Western culture will choose to be postmodern but "individual centered."

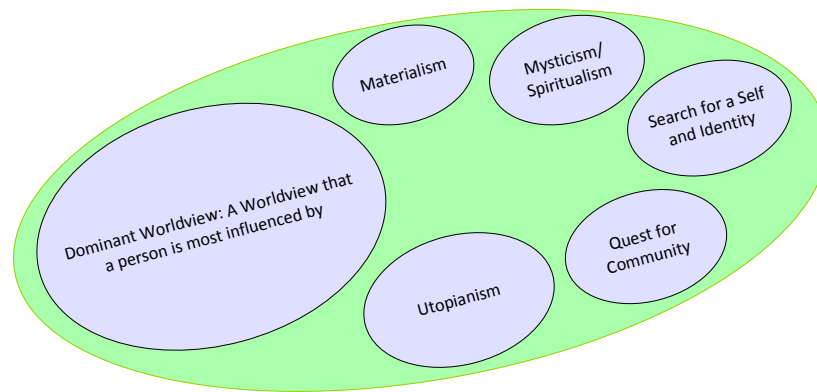


Figure 5 – Smorgasbord of Worldviews

As chameleons, they struggle, not only with understanding their identity, but also with their direction and purpose in life. Since they do not know who they are, they do not know what they are supposed to be or do. They do not know why they are here. Many feel a sense of lost-ness not knowing which direction that they should take. Further they feel that life is meaningless not knowing the purpose for their lives. This process is further complicated by cultural difference as basis for decision making.⁶⁴

Struggling with their identity and direction for their lives, many 2nd Generation Korean-Americans struggle with self-esteem and a sense of insignificance. Many feel worthless and motivated to prove their worth – locking them up in an endless performance cycle. In addition, many Asian-Americans in general and Korean-

⁶⁴ Influenced by Confucius's teachings on filial piety and hierarchy, traditional Asian cultures value duty and obligation as the highest motive for making decisions. Mature Asians recognize and accept their social responsibilities. By contrast, modern Western cultures believe an individual's self-actualization is the highest motive for decision-making. Mature Westerners act consistently with their self-understanding. Therefore doing something "because I should" or "because it is expected" and not "because it feels right or honest to me" suggests maturity in traditional Asian cultures and immaturity in modern Western cultures. Greg Jao in Jeanette Yep, *Following Jesus*, p. 44

Americans in particular, feel the pressures from their parents to perform. One author illustrates:

Mary Li Hsu, assistant dean of Yale College and director of the Asian-American Cultural Center says, “Living with the expectation of being perfect – especially in math and science – is an enormous burden that can cause emotional problems for some (Asian American) students.” She adds that it is not uncommon to see an Asian American student “implode” under the pressure. “There’s a lot of depression going on.” According to a study done by Iwa Ministries, Asian Americans have the lowest self-esteem of any demographic group in the country.⁶⁵

What is surprising and important for this project is that the struggles of both 2nd generation Korean-American and that of the general population of postmodern contexts are very similar. Both struggle with identity, meaning, purpose, and the sense of homelessness – what one might conclude are the symptoms of lack of metanarrative in their lives. The 2nd generation Korean-American experience this lack of metanarrative in their lives precisely because they have been removed from a Confucian society where a metanarrative was already in place to give people their sense of place, meaning, direction and purpose. And of course, postmodern generations feel this lack of metanarrative because they have rejected any form of metanarrative in their lives and are in search of their own private metanarrative. This is illustrated by the Confucian worldview’s attempt to reconstruct a metanarrative in the lives of 2nd generation Korean-American through its lure of the “good” life.

⁶⁵ See Ibid., p. 28.

Confucius and the Lure of the “Good” Life

Although in one sense 2nd Generation Korean-Americans are very much “Americanized” in their thinking and mindset, one of the important elements in understanding the 2nd Generation Korean-American mind is to understand Confucianism and its lure of the “good” life. One author illustrates this,

For most Asian Americans, Confucianism is not a religion or even a philosophy to which they would intentionally devote themselves. Rather, it permeates the social and family structures, much in the way Americans do not recite the Declaration of Independence but certainly have the values of the Declaration woven into the fabric of their society.⁶⁶

Jeanette Yep goes on to explain Confucianism, briefly but clearly, worth quoting at length,

Confucius (K’ung Ch’iu) was a Chinese philosopher who lived from 551 to 479 B.C. In the midst of social upheaval, he tried to bring social and civic order. It is unclear if he put anything in writing, but his small band of followers compiled his teachings into the *Analects*.

The Tenets of Confucianism center around the concepts of *jen* and *li*. *Jen* is a combination of the characters for “human being” and for “two”; thus, emphatic humanity should be at the foundation of human relations. *Li* is a combination of morality and etiquette, custom and ritual.

Also at the heart of his teaching was the concept that successful individual human relations form the basis of society. To bring order to society, one must first bring order to the family. Order in the family ultimately brings order to the community, which brings order to the government.

Some other strong values of Confucianism include parental authority and honor (known as “filial piety”: children must honor and obey parents, putting their parents’ comfort, interest and wishes above their own), social hierarchy, male dominance, duty and obligation.⁶⁷

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 22.

⁶⁷ Ibid., pp. 20-21.

Confucianism is a worldview. Confucianism is not something you give assent to but it is a way of life that dictates how a person is to live. It is a worldview that permeates Korean-Americans thinking and it dictates many of their values. Confucian metanarrative sees the society as a web of relationship where each family occupies a “place” with duty and obligation to the whole.

The success and failure of the society depends greatly on the success and failures of each family. The society rewards the successful families by valuing them above other families and punishes “unsuccessful” families by not valuing them, even seeing them as consumer of society’s valuable resources. Given this understanding one can see how important it is to “save face” and to know one’s “place,” or to occupy a prestigious position in the society.

This is where the lure of the “good” life comes in. In Confucian culture, the “good” life is guaranteed by occupying a prestigious position in society – by occupying a respectable position, preferably higher up on the social ladder. For many 1st Generation Korean-Americans this position is secured through getting a good education, and getting a good job. This mindset drives even the most pious of Korean-American Christian families, without them even recognizing that Jesus has been left out of the picture. Further, there is no recognition that what they are constructing for themselves and for their children is a metanarrative, a grand story – from familiar materials of Confucianism with “good life” as their promise, prestigious positions in society as their hope, and putting their faith in hard work and education to get them there.

And in the absence of metanarrative in one's life, Confucian worldview offers an attractive alternative metanarrative for 2nd generation Korean-Americans to latch onto or at least shop from. Furthermore, because Confucian worldview is at the core of Korean culture and make up the basic fabric of family life in many Korean-American homes, it is easily picked up and absorbed into one's life.

Lastly, the main reason why the gospel does not penetrate the heart of 2nd generation Korean-Americans is that the Churches' Bible studies and preaching often does not challenge the reigning metanarrative in their lives – whether it be Confucian or postmodern. Based on the modern paradigm (and perhaps already co-opted into Enlightenment paradigm), many Bible studies, at best, offer piecemeal solutions and neglect to give people a comprehensive worldview.⁶⁸

The purpose of this project, therefore, is to provide for the local church, especially in 2nd generation Korean American contexts, a study retreat that will tell the biblical story line and give the building materials for constructing a biblical worldview.

The first section of this project began with the bold assertion that “human life is governed by story.” In the next section, this project will examine the biblical validity of such assertion and provide a theological framework for the proposed learning retreat.

⁶⁸ George Barna, “Only Half of Protestant Pastors have a Biblical Worldview.” Published on barna.org, at <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=156>. See also George Barna, “Most Adults Feel Accepted by God, But Lack a Biblical Worldview.” Published on barna.org, at <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=194>

Chapter 2: Theological Framework

It is often said that the question is not whether one has theology or not.

Everyone has a theology. The question is whether one has a good theology or not.

What this statement is pointing out is that everyone has a theological framework from which they view the world and makes sense of the world. The aim of this chapter is to provide a theological framework for the thesis-project.⁶⁹

The First Element of the Framework: Metanarrative Framework

James Sire, in his book, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic World View Catalog*, writes, “Whenever any of us thinks about anything – from a casual thought (Where did I leave my watch?) to a profound question (Who am I?) – we are operating within... a framework.”⁷⁰ He defines this framework as one’s worldview. He further defines worldview in this way,

A worldview is a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart, that can be expressed as a story or in a set of pre-suppositions (things that are assumed to be true, partially true or entirely false), which we hold (consciously or subconsciously, consistently or inconsistently) about the basic make-up of our world.⁷¹

For example, when a person says something is unbelievable or incredible, what they are stating essentially is that what just happened in front of them does not fit well into the framework with which they view the world.

⁶⁹ The aim of the thesis-project is to provide a theological framework for the recovery of metanarrative is one’s life. Hence, one should not be surprised to find many of the concepts and ideas showing up in the actual thesis-project (chap. 5).

⁷⁰ James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door: A Basic World View Catalog*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004), p. 17.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 17.

Furthermore, one of the interesting developments along with society's shift from modernism to postmodernism is the inclusion of the "story" element in James Sire's definition of worldview.⁷² Postmodernism, against the sterility of modernism, has finally declared that the emperor has no clothes. As noted in previous section, "going all the way back to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle ... the development of the human mind and consciousness is a function of the weightiness of stories and their plots, their character, their denouements, and their overall explanations of things."⁷³

Given this understanding of how the human mind works, according to philosophers like Socrates, Plato and Aristotle, perhaps it is not so surprising to find that the Bible is more than just propositions and principles but is full of narratives comprising one grand narrative. As Bartholomew and Goheen writes,

Sometimes Christians have treated the Bible as if it were a systematic list of propositions like the Westminster or Belgic Confessions. But though the Bible is the ultimate source of these great documents, it clearly is not written in the same way, as a series of propositional truths, nor does it have the same purpose. Over the past few decades, one of the most exciting developments in biblical studies has been the growing recognition among some scholars that the Bible has the shape of a *story*, that is "an immense, sprawling, capacious narrative."⁷⁴

When one opens the Bible, from the start, he or she is invited into a story. One does not just learn about God and humanity as one proposition after another, but one learns about God and humanity in the context of a story. And one part of the theological framework of this project is to take seriously this narrative element of the

⁷² It is interesting to note that the previous editions of James Sire's book, *The Universe Next Door*, do not have this story component in his definition of worldview. Compare James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 3rd ed. (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1997), p. 16 with James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, 4th ed. (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004), p. 17.

⁷³ David Naugle, p. 297.

⁷⁴ Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*, p. 21.

Bible. Christians are people who have been invited to partake in this story. One can take a cue from the Apostle Paul who addresses both Jewish and Gentile Christians⁷⁵ in Galatians 3:7: “Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham,” also in 3:26-28,

...for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise.

What Paul is telling his audience is that it is not through racial or ethnic identity or through circumcision one enters into God's story as Paul's opponents insist, but by having the same faith as Abraham that one enters into God's story. David DeSilva writes,

For Paul, however, it was Abraham's trust in God and not his circumcised flesh that made him the recipient of God's promise and resulted in his being accounted “righteous” in God's sight. ... Humanity was no longer to be divided into opposing dyads – Jews on the one hand, Greeks on the other... Rather, these oppositions and dyads have been resolved in Christ, with whom each Christian has been clothed, so that “Christ's” becomes the only term of significance to define the identity and belonging of each. The Galatians may be sure, therefore, that they are Abraham's children and heirs of the promise since they have been fully immersed in Christ.⁷⁶

One can also take a cue from Moses' intention in writing the Pentateuch. John Sailhamer writes,

...the people for whom Moses wrote the Pentateuch needed to know more fully what was about to happen to them. They needed to know who they were and the great purpose God had for them in his covenant. Thus, as part of the overall task of forming this people into a nation obedient to God, Moses wrote a history

⁷⁵ David A. DeSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament: Contexts, Methods & Ministry Formation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2004), pp. 513-517.

⁷⁶ Ibid., pp. 513-514.

of the “children of Israel.” In this history he explained to Israel who they were and why they had come to Egypt. Moreover, he showed them that they were not an ordinary people. They were descendants of a promised seed – heirs to the great covenant promises that God had made to their forefathers. Moses wanted Israel to know that what was happening to them was not simply a liberation from a particularly bad period of enslavement. Rather, God was beginning to work in their lives and they were now becoming a major part of his program to redeem the world to himself. They were being called into fellowship with a God who wanted nothing short of their perfect obedience and trust.⁷⁷

It is amazing that this aspect of Moses’ brilliance (of course, Holy Spirit has a lot to do with this) in writing a history of the “children of Israel” is not emphasized more in many of the churches. What many Christians miss out when they are exposed only to propositional truths and principles is that they are not readily exposed to the metanarrative quality of Scripture. Hence, there is no coherent recognition of who they are woven together with their sense of destiny – that they are part of something much larger than themselves.

For example, in movies and TV shows, one main question that a character with amnesia asks is, “Who am I?” The reason for this is that a person’s identity is very closely associated with his or her past history. Just as it is hard to understand the flow of a story when one reads from the middle of the book or a movie when one walk-in to the middle of the show, it is same with one’s sense of who he or she is. In order for people to get a better grasp of who they are, it is important to understand one’s history. And this applies not only to one’s identity but to one’s destiny as well. Without

⁷⁷ John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch As Narrative* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), p. 5.

understanding one's identity and one's history, it will be hard to project what one's destiny will be.⁷⁸

This can be diagrammed (figure 6) like this:

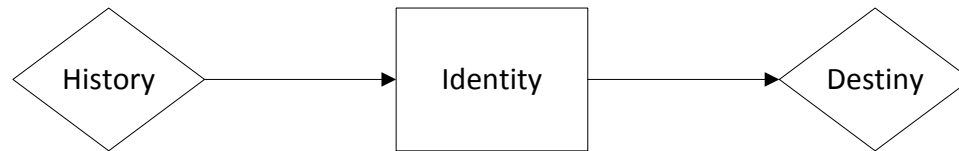


Figure 6 – History, Identity and Destiny

One can see that one's identity, history and destiny are all related. They are part of a cohesive whole. Hence, the "genius" of Moses who wrote a history of the "children of Israel" to give a new nation that was being formed, while wandering in the desert, was his recognition of this cohesiveness. Moses was giving the nation of Israel their sense of history, identity and destiny. Moses was giving the nation of Israel their metanarrative.

This is evident from the first pages of Genesis. To a people engrossed in the Egyptian metanarrative (Josh 24:14; Ezek 20:7; 23:1-4) and worldview, the first pages of Genesis takes on the reigning metanarrative of the day and usurps, challenges and transforms the story. One biblical scholar writes,

Each day of creation takes on two principal categories of divinity in the pantheons of the day, and declares that these are not gods at all, but creatures – creations of the one true God who is the only one, without a second or third. Each day dismisses an additional cluster of deities, arranged in a cosmological and symmetrical order. ... On the first day the gods of light and darkness are

⁷⁸ One of the beauties of the practice of Spiritual Direction is that it takes into consideration a person's history (especially in the form of intentional listening of person's narrative) as the spiritual director guides the directee. See Dan B. Allender, *To Be Told: Know Your Story, Shape Your Future* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: WaterBrook Press, 2005). He writes, "Our plot is an encounter with the heartache and dreams and desires related to our personal tragedies – the events of our life that occur between fall and redemption and, ultimately, glorification." Dan B. Allender, p. 15.

dismissed. On the second day, the gods of sky and sea. On the third day, earth gods and gods of vegetation. On the fourth day, sun, moon and star gods. The fifth and sixth days take away any associations with divinity from the animal kingdom. And finally human existence, too, is emptied of any intrinsic divinity – while at the same time all human beings, from the greatest to the least, and not just pharaohs, kings and heroes, are granted a divine likeness and mediation.⁷⁹

But what is important to note is that this usurping of the metanarrative of the day does not end with Moses. There is a deliberate attempt to get at the reader's heart's orientation to un-plug them from their current story and to re-plug them into the biblical story line as evident throughout each gateways of the Bible.

For example, in the book of Psalms, another gateway that precedes an entire section of the Bible, Psalm 1 is regarded by many scholars as a gateway psalm.⁸⁰ And the content of this psalm is none other than for the reader to consider two pathways and to choose the right one.⁸¹

Also in the book of Joshua, the first book of the *Nebiim*⁸², the book begins with the people of Israel gathering to “Remember the word that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded you... (Joshua 1:13),” and the people of Israel responding, “All that you have commanded us we will do, and wherever you send us we will go (Joshua 1:16).”

⁷⁹ Conrad Hyer, “Biblical Literalism: Constricting the Cosmic Dance,” p. 101. Cited in Bruce K. Waltke, *Biblical Theology Lecture Notes* (Vancouver: Regent College, 1996), p. 20.

⁸⁰ See Eugene Peterson, *Answering God: The Psalms as Tools for Prayer* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1989), p. 32. See also Peter Craigie, *Psalms 1-50*, WBC (Waco, Texas: Word Books Publisher, 2002), p. 58.

⁸¹ Most scholars take the book of Ruth as the first book in the *Ketubim* (Writings) which still provide a marvelous example of a gentile woman being plugged into the salvation history. This is further reflected in Matthew's genealogy in Matthew 1:5.

⁸² See Sailhamer, “*Biblical Theology and the Composition of the Hebrew Bible*” In *Biblical Theology: Retrospect and Prospect* edited by Scott Hafemann, p. 25. Sailhamer writes, “The Tanak is the rabbinical name given to the Hebrew OT, the Law (Ta = *Torah*), the Prophets (na = *Nebiim*) and the Writings (k = *Ketubim*). It is the same OT as in the Christian Bible, but the order of the individual books is different. The term is used... to refer to the OT canon and the order of its books at the time of Christ.”

There is also a strong possibility, one must note, that the book of Matthew, intended for a Jewish audience, starts with a genealogy in order that the reader will become drawn into the history and more readily recognize Jesus as the fulfillment of the Old Covenant promises.

This narrative quality of God's word is so evident that "God's big picture," according to Vaughan Roberts, can be diagrammed (figure 7) like this⁸³:

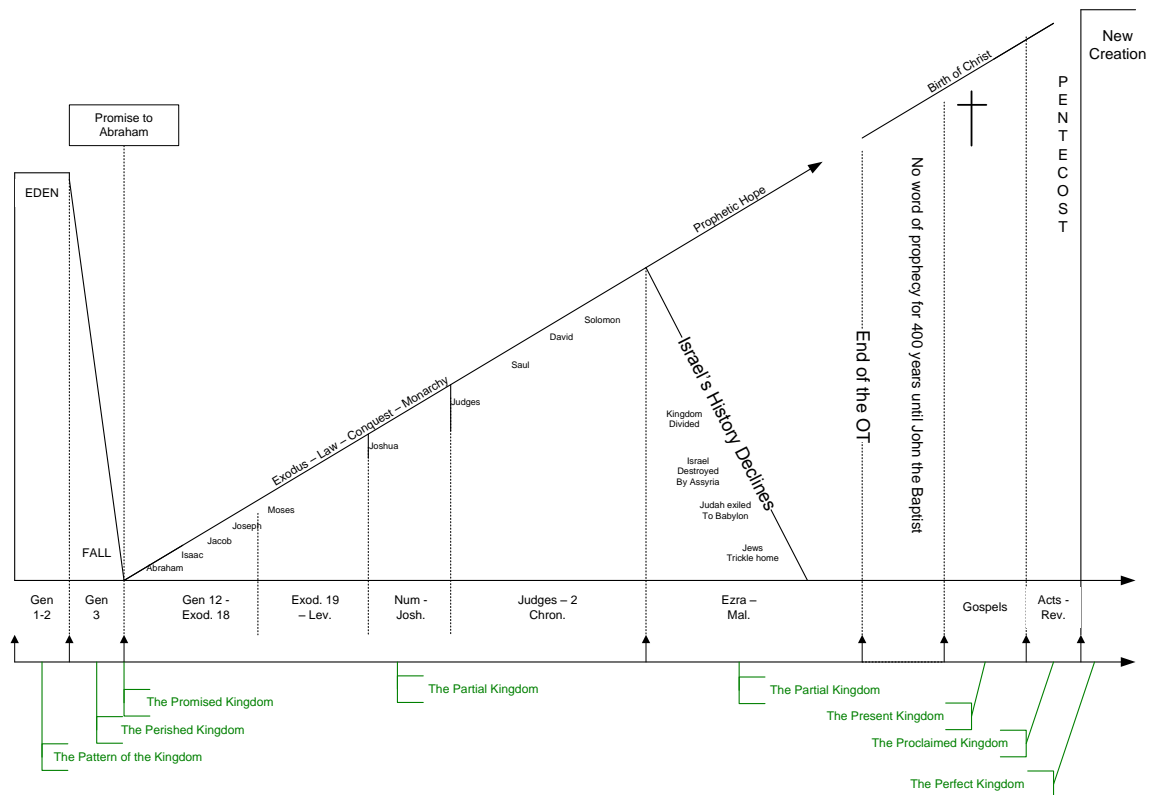


Figure 7 – God's Big Picture

Recently, Stephen Dempster in his book, *Dominion and Dynasty: A theology of the Hebrew Bible*, has proposed that the Old Testament has a narrative shape like this (figure 8)⁸⁴:

⁸³ Taken from Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Story: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002), p. 150.

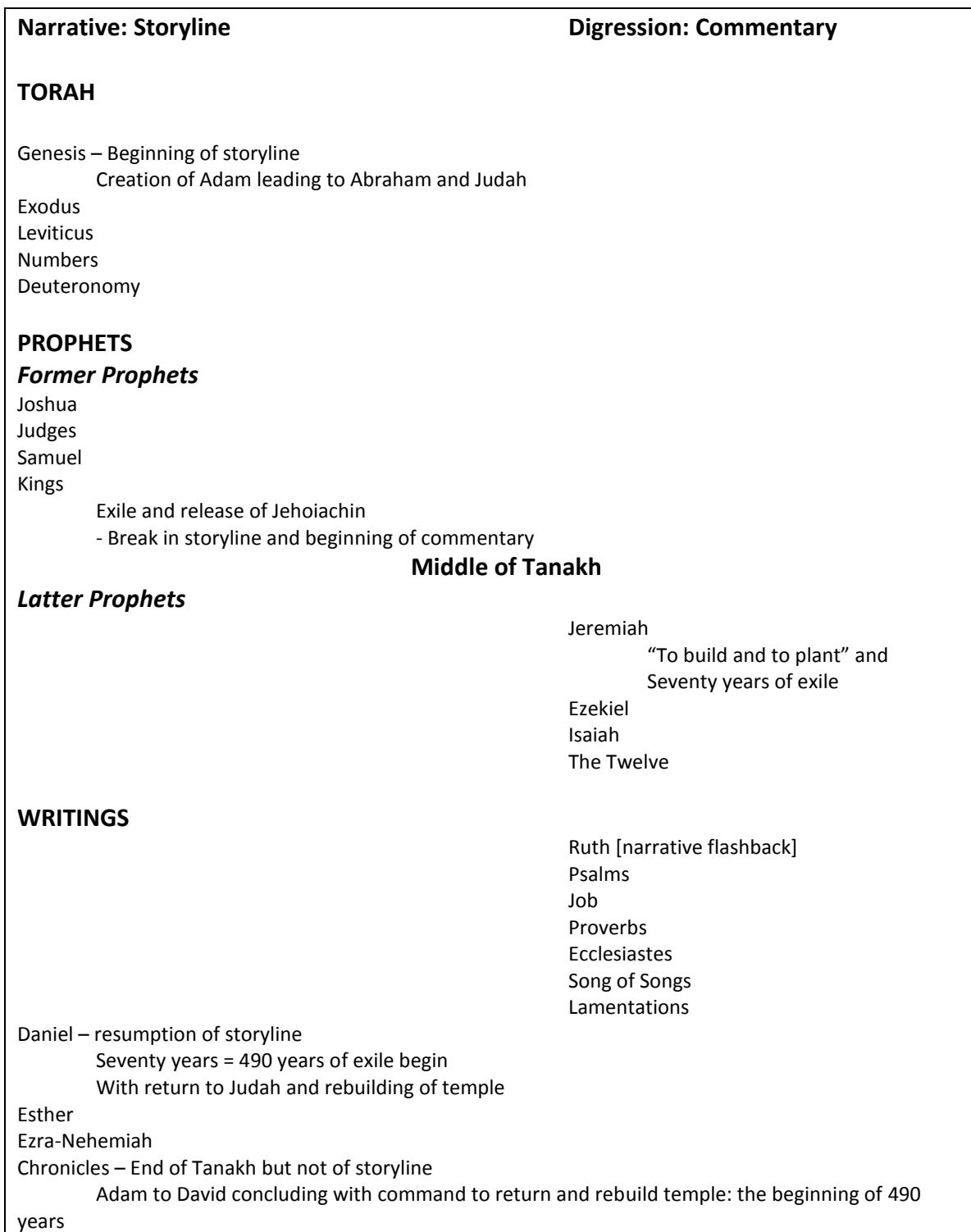


Figure 8 – Shape of the Hebrew Bible

⁸⁴ Taken from Stephen G. Dempster, *Dominion and Dynasty: A theology of the Hebrew Bible*, NSBT (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2003), p. 51.

An interesting possibility that Dempster's proposal opens is in regard to the question of "what to do with non-narrative books?" Dempster's proposal can show that the Bible is indeed narrative driven with books like psalms, proverbs, Song of Songs, the latter prophets focusing on the inner workings of a person's heart in regard to the narrative storyline.⁸⁵

The Second Element of the Framework: Covenantal Framework

If the first feature of the theological framework of this project is the metanarrative nature of the Bible, then the second is the covenantal nature of the Bible.

In the Old Testament the Bible reveals that one becomes a part of the story by entering into a covenant relationship with God – covenant which is initiated by God. Whether it is Adam and Eve, Abraham or the nation of Israel, the Bible is unambiguous that the covenant relationship always initiated and established by God, is the way one becomes a part of the story. One becomes the part of the story by responding to the covenant's demand – demand of dependence, trust and one's heart's allegiance.

In the Old Testament, if a person was not part of the ethnic Israel, one entered into a covenant relationship by switching one's allegiance to the God of Israel, to adopt Israel's laws and stipulations as well as her cultic practices. This is illustrated in the book of Ruth, where Ruth, a Moabite widow, declares to her Israelite mother-in-law, Naomi, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my

⁸⁵ Perhaps it is no accident that the books labeled "digression: commentary" are filled with emotive content, more introspective than the narrative accounts labeled "narrative: storyline" in Dempster's proposal.

God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you (Ruth 1:16-18)."

In the New Testament, as in the Old Testament, the Bible reveals that one, again, becomes a part of the story by entering into a covenant relationship with God, but this time specifically, through a person – Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. The Bible reveals that one becomes a part of the salvation story by entrusting one's life to Jesus Christ. When modern Christians talk about being "saved," what they are really talking about is getting in on the story. Jesus teaches in Mark 1:15 that the way to get in on the story is by "Repenting and Believing in the Good News" – to turn from one's rebellion and to believe the good news of salvation. But one of the important elements of getting in on this story is that it is not a mere intellectual exercise. This believing is not a just a rational belief such as a belief in the historical veracity of existence of George Washington. Rather it is an orientation of one's heart and the movement of one's heart. It is a matter of trust and dependence. It is a movement of the heart that beats faith, hope and love⁸⁶.

Believing in Jesus is a movement of the heart that starts with faith, moves to hope, and to love, tied to the covenant structure of the Bible⁸⁷,

- 1) *God's Unconditional Acts of Provision*, by which he [God] always initiates and establishes the covenant relationship, which leads to
- 2) *The Covenant Stipulations or "Conditions,"* upon which the covenant relationship is maintained, which leads to
- 3) *The Covenant Promises or Curses*, based on keeping or not keeping the covenant.

⁸⁶ Scott Hafemann, *The God of Promise and the Life of Faith* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2001), pp. 20, 57, and 60.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

What is interesting is that this covenantal framework goes hand in hand with the narrative framework (see figure 9 below).

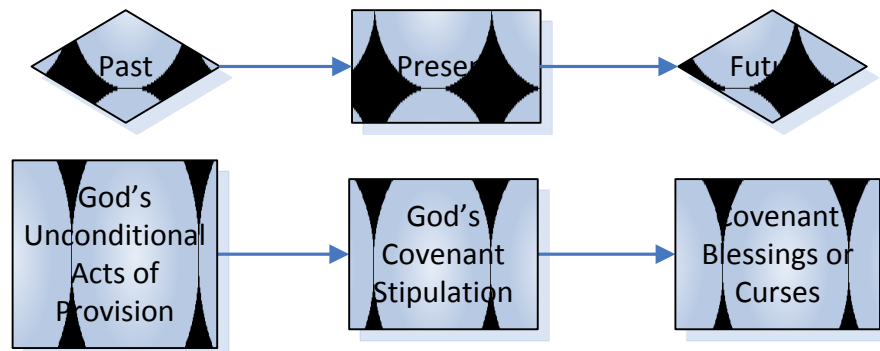


Figure 9 – Components of God's Covenant: Past, Present and Future

Faith, better understood as “trust” or “dependence,” is one’s heart’s response to God’s gracious acts of provision in one’s life (see figure 10), whether it is a rescue from slavery in Egypt or a rescue from slavery in sin and death.

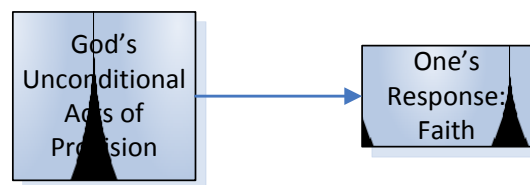


Figure 10 – God's Provision and Our Response

The second movement of the heart in response to God’s provision is hope. The heart moves from response of faith to hope as it looks to the future because the heart comes to learn from God’s “track record” that God’s provision in the past and God’s very character (see figure 11 below) bring with it God’s continuing commitment for provision in the future (Phil. 1:6). This movement from faith to hope is best illustrated, Scott Hafemann states, in the life of Abraham:

Anyone who knows the story of Abraham’s life knows...that his faith did not just “happen”; he had to *learn* to trust God more and more in more and more difficult circumstances. For in his wisdom God taught Abraham to keep the

covenant by placing his promises in constant jeopardy on the one hand, only to rescue them repeatedly on the other. Initially, between the jeopardy and the rescue there was panic and disobedience as Abraham sought to secure God's promises through his own strength and ingenuity. But eventually Abraham learned from God's track record of faithfulness to resist distrusting God when his word was called into question. In the end, Abraham even expected God to keep his commitment in the face of death. This is the lesson book of Abraham's life.⁸⁸

Scott Hafemann writes, "'Faith' is not believing the unbelievable but trusting in God's word because of what one has come to know of God's character. ...*faith is trusting God to do what he has promised because we are convinced by his provisions that God is both willing and able to keep his word (italics original).*"⁸⁹

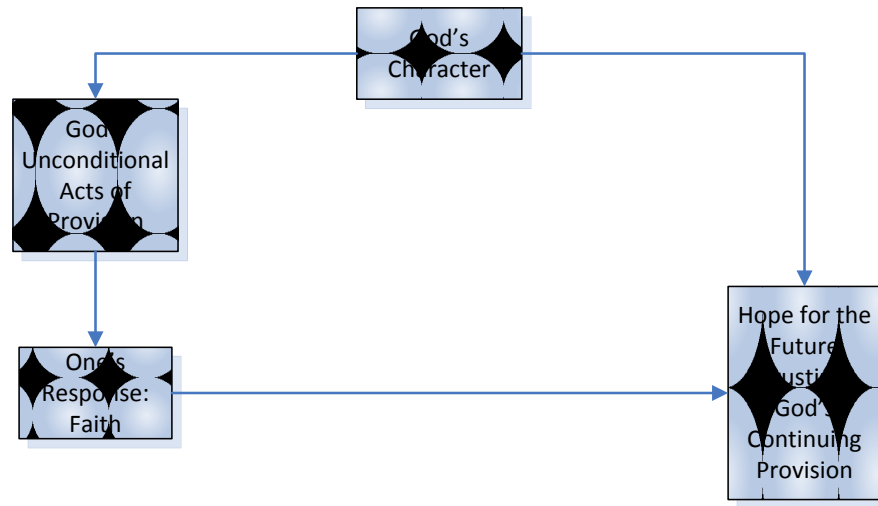


Figure 11 – God's Character Transforms Our Faith in God in the Past to Hope in God in Our Future

And as one trust God for the past and hope in God and his promises for the future, the Bible shows one's life will display the expression of this faith and hope – love (Col. 1:4-5) (See figure 12). And it is here that the covenantal framework throws a “twist” to the narrative framework. In the covenantal framework, the movement of the heart does not move from the past to the present to the future (see figure 12). Rather,

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 74.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp. 76, 84.

in the covenantal framework, the movement of the heart runs from the past, from one's response of faith, to the future, with hope in God's character that he will continue to do what he has done in the past. And in the covenant framework, it is the presence of both faith and hope that produces love (Col. 1:4-5).

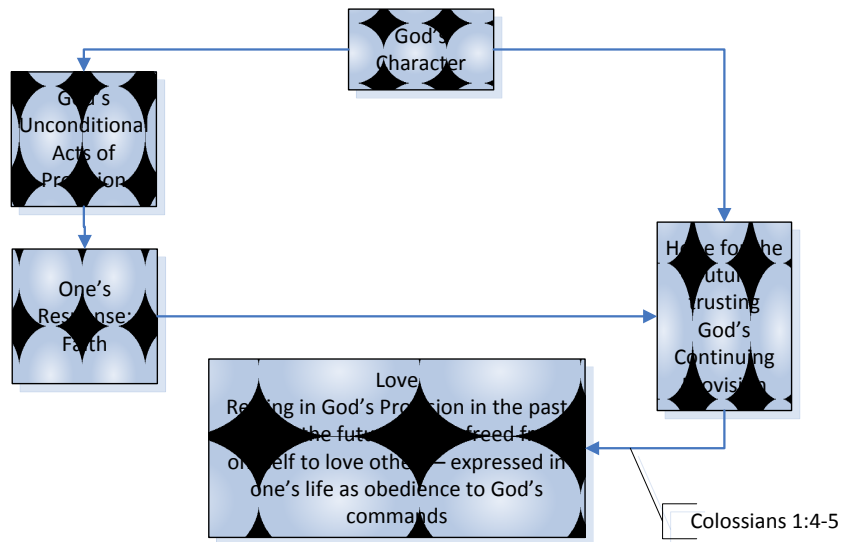


Figure 12 – Faith and Hope Make Love Possible

Hence, it is all three responses of the heart, faith, hope and love, that constitute the fulfillment of one's covenant stipulation⁹⁰ (See Figure 13).

⁹⁰ With the language of covenant "stipulation" I am aware that I am swimming in the treacherous theological waters. However, the scope and the nature of the discussion are so vast that it is beyond the scope of this paper to engage. For further discussion, see Scott J. Hafemann, *The God of the Promise and the Life of Faith* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2001), especially the endnotes, pp. 222-246.

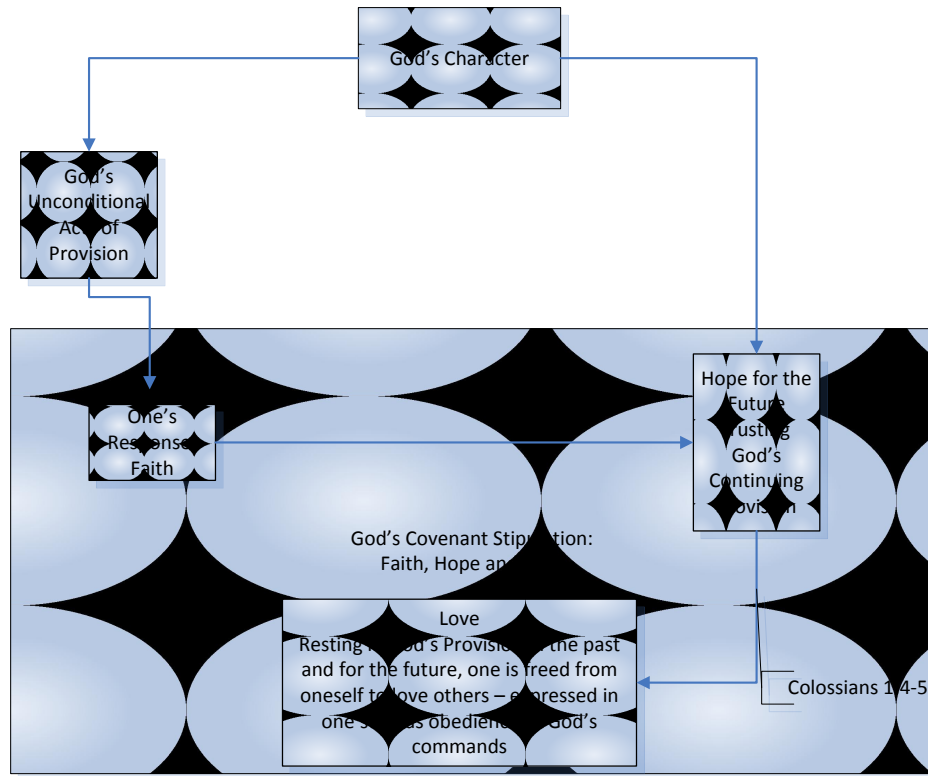


Figure 13 – Faith, Hope and Love as Covenant Stipulation

Scott Hafemann states,

...God's provisions never stand alone. Every act of God's past provision brings with it a commitment for the present and promises for the future. In turn, these provisions and promises inevitably lead to commands that stipulate what our response to God should be. These commands thus depend on and express the reality of what God has done, is doing, and will do on our behalf. God's demands correspond to his gifts – past, present, and future. ...confidence in God's promises (hope) because of a trust in his provisions (faith) expresses itself in obedience to his commands (love). God's commands thus map out the way in which we are to magnify his surpassing value, power, and love in our everyday lives. Our lives of obedience, summarized by the command to love others, thus fulfill God's purpose of revealing his glorious character in the world.⁹¹

⁹¹ Ibid., p. 57.

This project's covenantal framework can be diagrammed this way (See Figure

14)⁹²

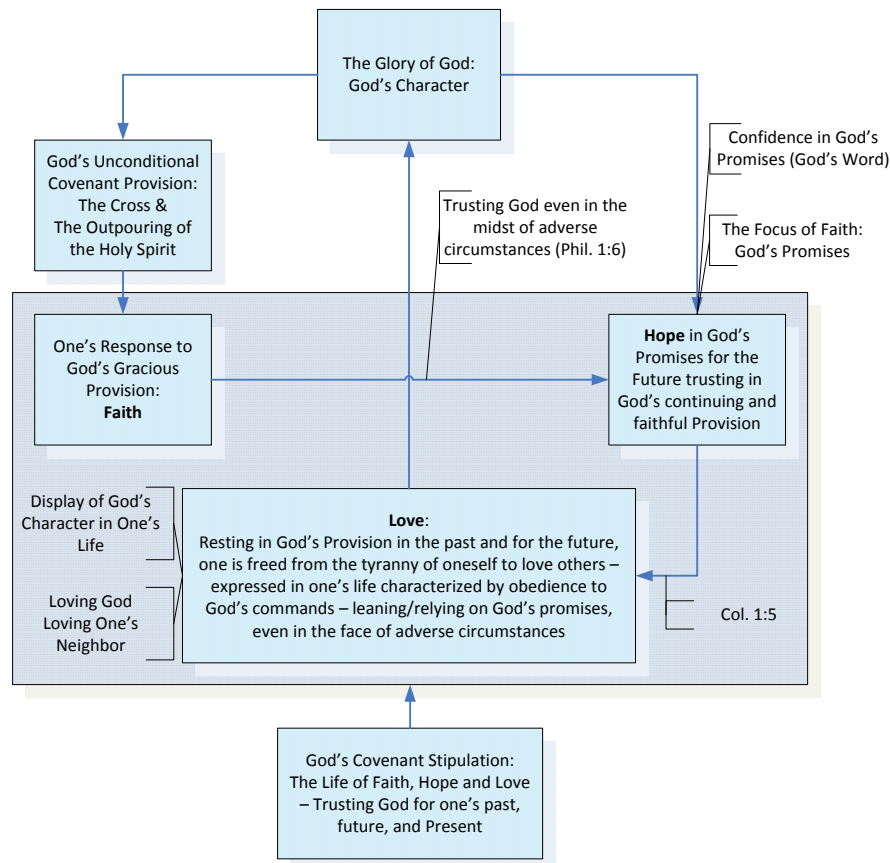


Figure 14 – Faith, Hope and Love: Covenant Framework

The Third Element of the Framework: Living from the Heart

The third building block of the theological framework for this project is that the “human existence proceeds ‘kardiopically’ on the basis of a vision of the heart.”⁹³

According to James Sire, a worldview is first and foremost “a commitment, a fundamental orientation of the heart.”⁹⁴

⁹² The bulk of my theological framework is drawn from Scott J. Hafemann. See Scott J. Hafemann, *The God of Promise and the Life of Faith* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2001), see also Thomas Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God's Glory in Christ* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2001).

⁹³ David Naugle, *Worldview*, p. 270.

⁹⁴ Op Cit., p. 17.

A heart, in Hebraic thought, according to David Naugle in his book, *Worldview: A History of a Concept*, is,

...the central, defining element of human person. ... In Hebraic thought the heart is comprehensive in its operations as the seat of the intellectual (e.g., Prov. 2:10a; 14:33; Dan. 10:12), affective (e.g., Exod. 4:14; Ps. 13:2; Jer. 15:16), volitional (e.g., Judg. 5:15; 1 Chron. 29:18; Prov. 16:1), and religious life of a human being (e.g., Deut. 6:5; 2 Chron. 16:9; Ezek. 6:9; 14:3).⁹⁵

The New Testament is in agreement with the Old Testament and carries the same perspective about the heart,

Indeed, according to various New Testament authors, the heart is the psychic center of human affections (Matt. 22:37-39; John 14:1, 27; 2 Cor. 2:4), the source of the spiritual life (Acts 8:21; Rom. 2:29; 2 Cor. 3:3), and the seat of the intellect and the will (Rom. 1:21; 2 Cor. 9:7; Heb. 4:12).⁹⁶

David Naugle points out that Jesus shares this point of view as well. He specifically points out this insight from Jesus' teaching in the Sermon on the Mount, particularly in Matthew 6:19-21,

There Jesus offers a warning about earthly and heavenly treasures as contrasting options for a person's basic pursuit in life... The choice of either is all-determinative, and for this reason Jesus associates it with that unifying faculty and hub of life, stating, 'for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also' (Matt. 6:19-21; cf. Luke 12:33-34). Once one's treasure is identified, the heart will not be far behind. Neither will a particular way of life. Jesus knew that the kind of treasure occupying one's heart will manifest itself in practical ways through patterns of speech and conduct.⁹⁷

Jesus is stating that one's conduct and speech is determined by one's heart's commitment – an orientation of one's heart as James Sire puts it. Whatever the subject

⁹⁵ David Naugle, pp. 267-268.

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 268-269.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. 269.

of one's heart's loyalty and commitment, such as a treasure that occupies one's heart, determines and shapes one's speech and actions.

Bruce Waltke, a professor of Old Testament at the Reformed Seminary substantiates this point in his massive commentary on the book of Proverbs,

The ancients attributed *the body's functions* to the heart. ... The heart in biblical anthropology controls the body, its facial expressions (Prov. 15:13), its tongue (15:28; 12:23), and all its other members (4:23-27; 6:18). ... The Old Testament also attributes *the psyche's functions* to the heart. No other English word combines the complex interplay of intellect, sensibility, and will. ...the biblical writers attributed *spiritual functions* to the heart; it accepts and trusts in the religious sphere (3:5). The heart feels all modes of desire, from the lowest physical forms, such as hunger and thirst, to the highest spiritual forms, like reverence and remorse. Closely related to its pious function is its ethical activity. ... Basic to its psychological and spiritual functions is *the heart's spiritual state* or condition; it can be wise (14:33) and pure (20:9), or perverse (17:20; 26:23-25). This direction or bent of the heart determines its decisions and thus the person's actions. ... As the heart receives these teachings, they influence the character of the whole, but the heart as a totality must let these forces enter it and determine its direction. Since the heart is the center of all of a person's emotional-intellectual-religious-moral activity, it must be safeguarded above all things (4:23).⁹⁸

This insight that "the heart of the matter of worldview is that worldview is a matter of the heart,"⁹⁹ David Naugle tells us, is what the philosophers stumbled unto when they coined the term, "worldview." He explains,

What did the originators of "worldview" accidentally stumble upon, what were they unintentionally identifying about humankind when they invented this notion? I propose that they were putting their finger, in an adequate though incomplete way, on the biblical understanding of the pivotal nature and function of the heart in human experience. What the heart is and does in a biblical way is what the philosophers were getting at unconsciously in coining the term "worldviews."¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Bruce Waltke, *The Book of Proverbs: Chapters 1-15, NICOT* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2004), pp. 90-92.

⁹⁹ *Op Cit.*, p. 269.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 269-270.

Dallas Willard, a noted philosopher and the author of the book, *Renovation of the Heart*, summarizes what many philosophers and the biblical evidence point to. He states, “We live from our heart.”¹⁰¹ He writes,

Our life and how we find the world now and in the future is, almost totally, a simple result of what we have become in the depths of our being – in our spirit, will, or heart. From there we see our world and interpret reality. From there we make our choices, break forth into action, try to change our world.¹⁰²

Willard provides a diagram¹⁰³ (figure 15) what this might look like,

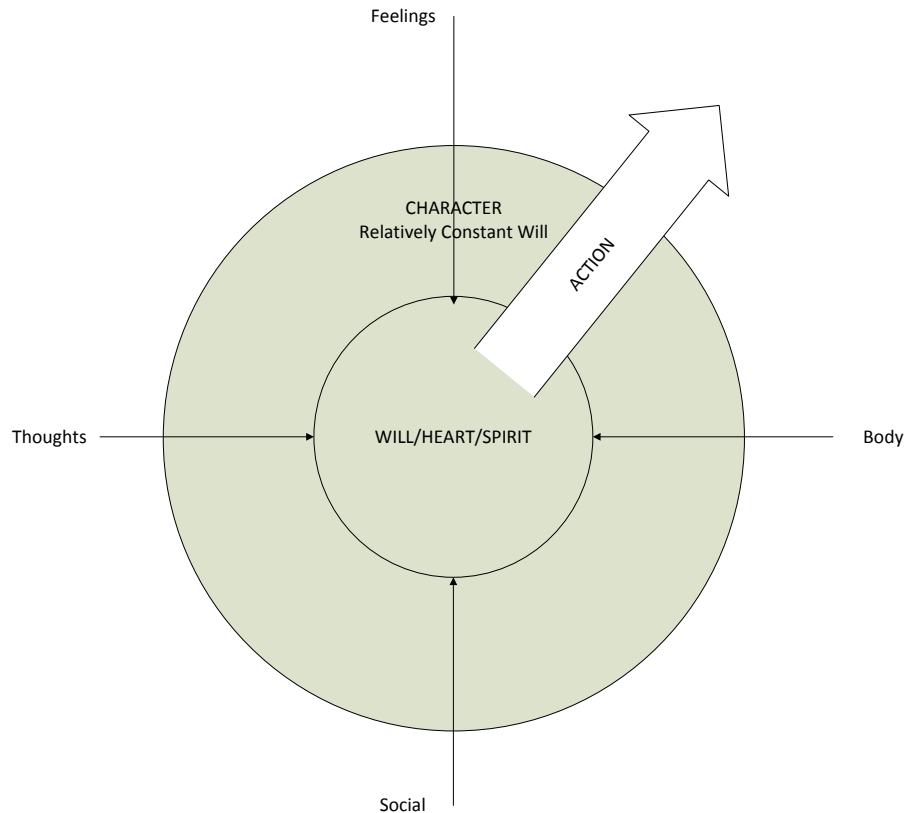


Figure 15 – From the Heart Action Springs

¹⁰¹ Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart* (Colorado Springs, Colorado: Navpress, 2002), p. 13.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 40.

What Dallas Willard is saying through this diagram is that while a person's action flows from the heart, the heart is shaped by, or "formed" by many factors and influences. He writes,

In any case, we may be sure of this: the formation and, later, transformation of the inner life of man, from which our outer existence flows, is an inescapable human problem. *Spiritual formation, without regard to any specifically religious context or tradition, is the process by which the human spirit or will is given a definite "form" or character.* It is a process that happens to everyone. The most despicable as well as the most admirable of persons have had a spiritual formation. Terrorists as well as saints are the outcome of spiritual formation. Their spirits or hearts have been formed. Period.¹⁰⁴

Further, Willard writes, distinctively Christian spiritual formation is "the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself."¹⁰⁵ Hafemann also makes the same point, he writes,

The Holy Spirit's invasion of our lives is the *beginning* of our transformation into the character of God, not its end (2 Cor. 3:18). By God's grace and power, all believers are therefore "in process." The life of faith is not perfection overnight, but progression over a lifetime (2 Pet. 1:5-7). It is inconceivable to think that the same Spirit who raised Jesus from the dead would come into our lives and then do nothing. Where the Spirit is at work, our love and its "fruits of righteousness" abound "more and more" as we mature in our dependence upon Christ (Phil. 1:9-11). A growing, persevering faith in God's promises, expressed in obedience to his commands, is both the gift and call of God. As we read in 1 Peter 1:2, we have been "chosen and destined by God the Father and sanctified by the Spirit *for obedience to Jesus Christ*" (italics original).¹⁰⁶

How does the Spirit shape "the inner world of the human self"? A clue is found in 1 Thessalonians 1:9, "...and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 22.

¹⁰⁶ Hafemann, *The God of Promise and the Life of Faith*, pp. 215-216.

true God.” Thomas Schreiner commenting on this passage, in his book *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ*, writes,

Faith involves a radical turning to the one and only God, and the shift in loyalty signifies a new vision of the future. A new faith always implies a new hope, and this is verified by the next verse in 1 Thessalonians. The Thessalonians renounced their idols and pledged their service to God, waiting for the return of Christ... Genuine faith is always a persevering faith because it is animated by the hope that the God who called believers to himself will save them from this wrath on the day of the Lord.¹⁰⁷

What Thomas Schreiner is stating is that it is faith, hope and love made alive by the Holy Spirit that reforms the heart. What else shapes the heart?

One observation that David Naugle makes which is a key element for this project is the relationship that Naugle draws between the heart and the place of stories or narratives. He writes, “This is why, for example, both Plato and Augustine were very concerned about the narrative education of the young.”¹⁰⁸ He reveals the motive behind this concern:

Because the consequences of these factors in due course will be retained and form the wellsprings of life, the wisdom teacher in Proverbs admonishes his hearers to watch over the heart most diligently (Prov. 4:24). Hence the sum and substance of the heart – its essential religious posture, patterns of thought, basic affections, and volitional activity – in short, what I am calling a “worldview,” sustains an *interactive or reciprocal* relationship with the external world. As an individual passes through the various stages of human development, the heart obtains a vision of reality, even though it cannot explain exactly how.¹⁰⁹

What David Naugle is saying is that Augustine and Plato were concerned about what stories are taught to children because these stories, in essence, form the heart.

¹⁰⁷ Thomas Schreiner, *Paul, Apostle of God’s Glory in Christ* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2001), pp. 271-272.

¹⁰⁸ David Naugle, p. 271.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

He shares the concerns of Augustine and Plato and tells why stories or the narratives that nourish the heart are so important.

Behold, then, the power of signs and symbols across the whole spectrum of reality and human existence. They permeate the physical universe; they are germane to all aspects of culture; they are essential to human thought, cognition, and communication; they are efficacious instruments of either truth or falsehood; they create symbolic worlds in which people live, move, and have their being. Indeed, a certain string of symbols possesses unique cultural power and determines the meaning of life. As an individual's or culture's foundation and system of denotative signs, they are promulgated through countless communicative avenues and mysteriously find their way to the innermost regions of the heart. There they provide a foundation and interpretation of life. They inform the categories of consciousness. *They are the putative object of faith and the basis for hope*, however it may be conceived. They are embraced as true and offer a way of life. They are the essential source of individual and sociocultural security. They are personal and cultural structures that define human existence (*italics added*).¹¹⁰

Augustine and Plato, according to Naugle, were concerned about what stories are taught to their young because these stories shape and nourish a person's heart by shaping one's faith, hope and love. Dallas Willard draws a similar conclusion in this diagram (figure 16)¹¹¹:

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 296.

¹¹¹ Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, p. 35.

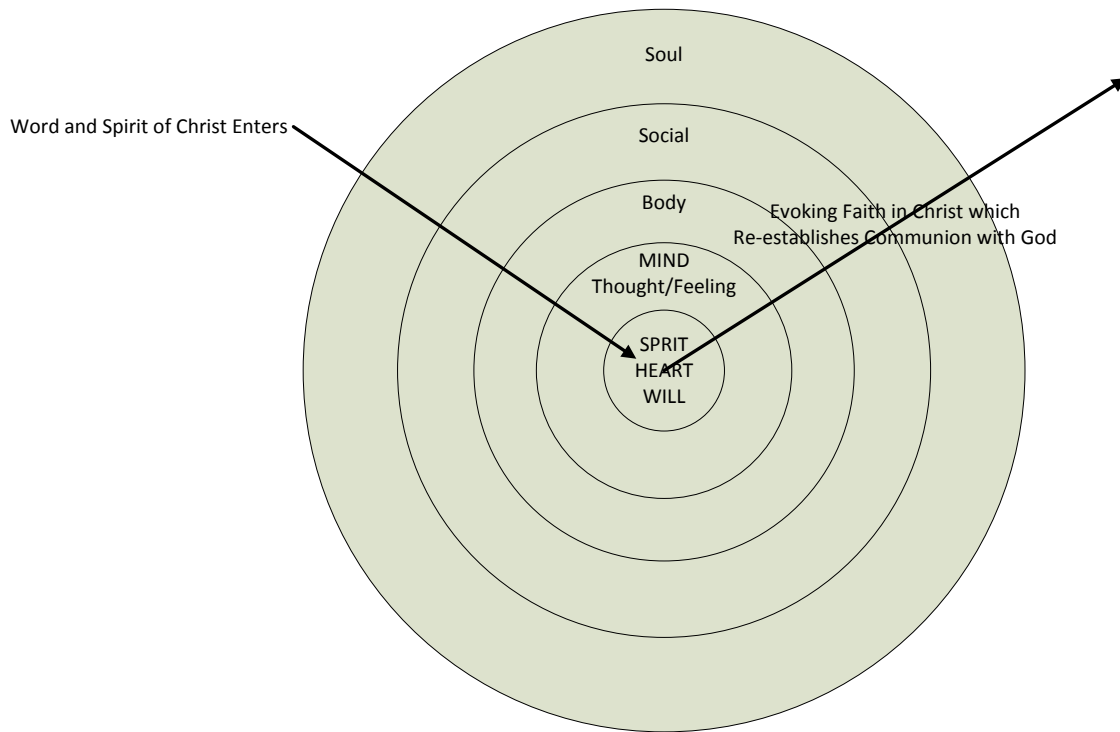


Figure 16 – The Word and the Spirit Evoke Faith in Christ

What Willard's diagram draws attention to is how the provision of God's word and the Spirit evokes the heart to respond to God in faith. And, as noted in the second feature of theological framework, faith in God's provisions and God's character gives birth to hope in God's word and his promises which in turn becomes a springboard for love.

Conclusion

When one puts all three building blocks together, they look like this:

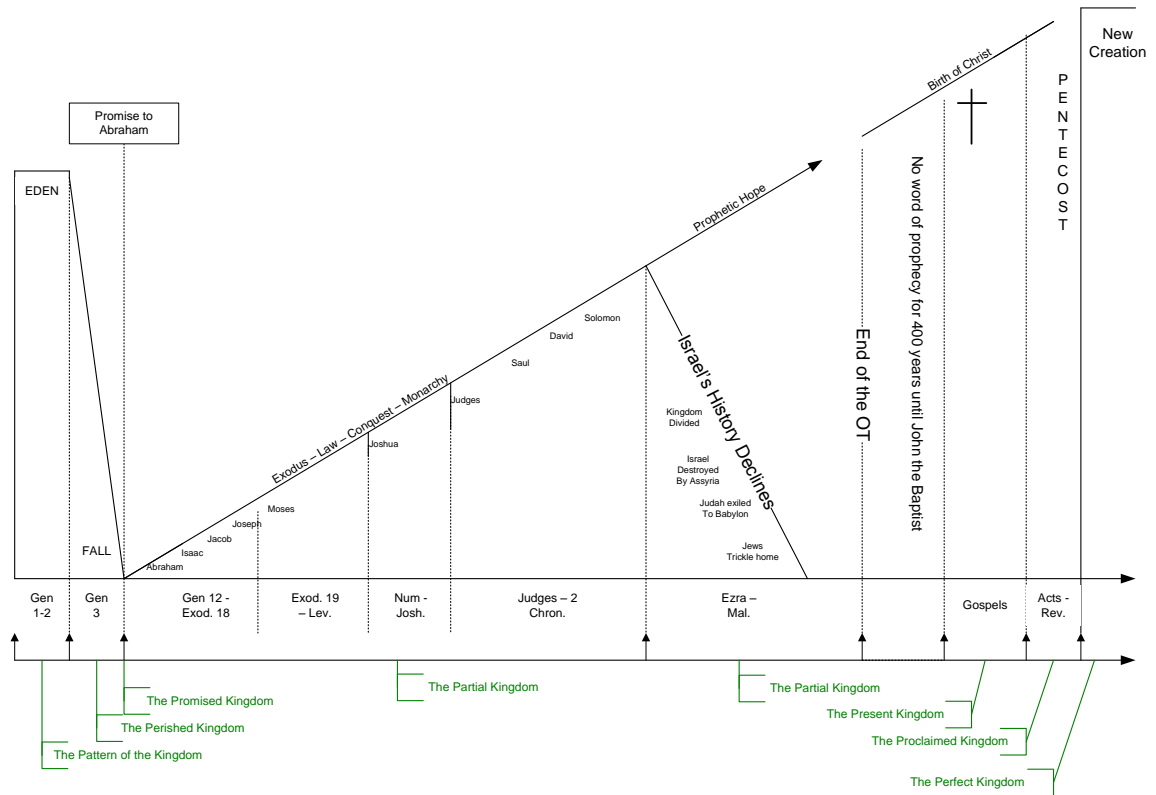


Figure 17 – God’s Big Picture

One is presented with the sweeping, overarching, grand narrative, or metanarrative, of the Bible as one’s narrative landscape (figure 17). One is invited into the story and to the relationship with the living God through the historical reality of God’s Unconditional Provision in the death of his Son on the Cross (see figure 19 below), the vindication of his Son by his raising Jesus from the dead, and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, which makes possible one’s heart coming alive to the reality of God and to the story of God (figure 17).

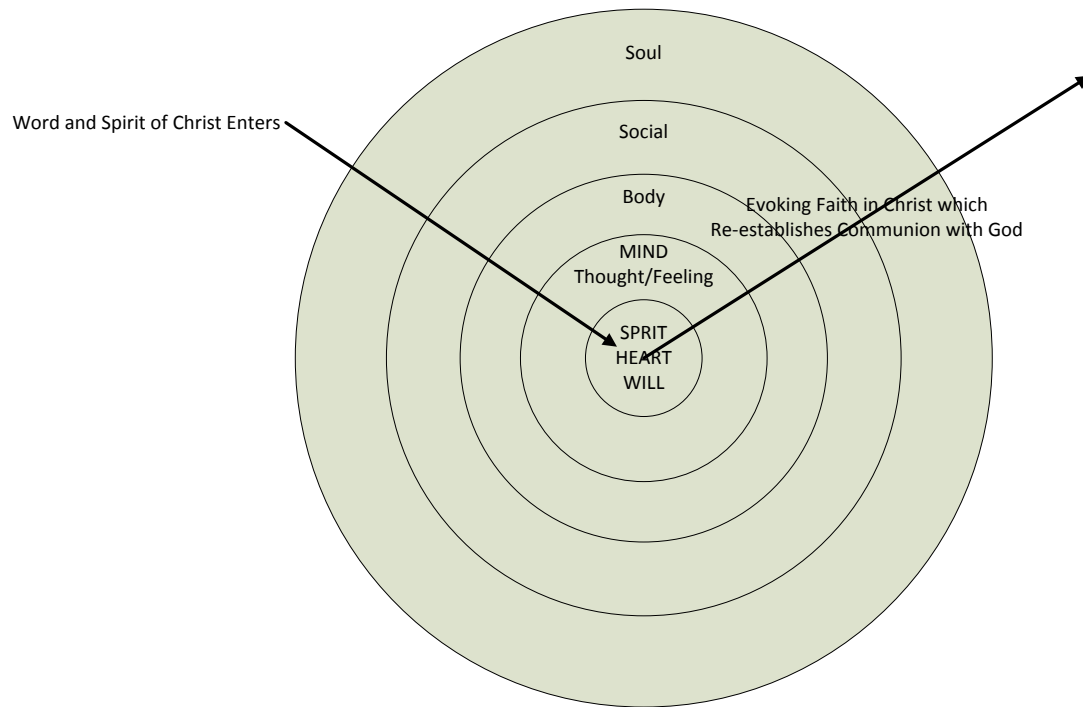


Figure 18 – The Word and the Spirit Evoke Faith in Christ

Further, the provision of the Word and the Spirit (Figure 18) enables one to respond to God’s provision in Faith, Hope and Love, enabled by the Spirit, to fulfill the covenant stipulation by displaying in one’s life the character of God through life of obedience to God’s command to love – to love God and to love others (Figure 19), bringing glory to God.

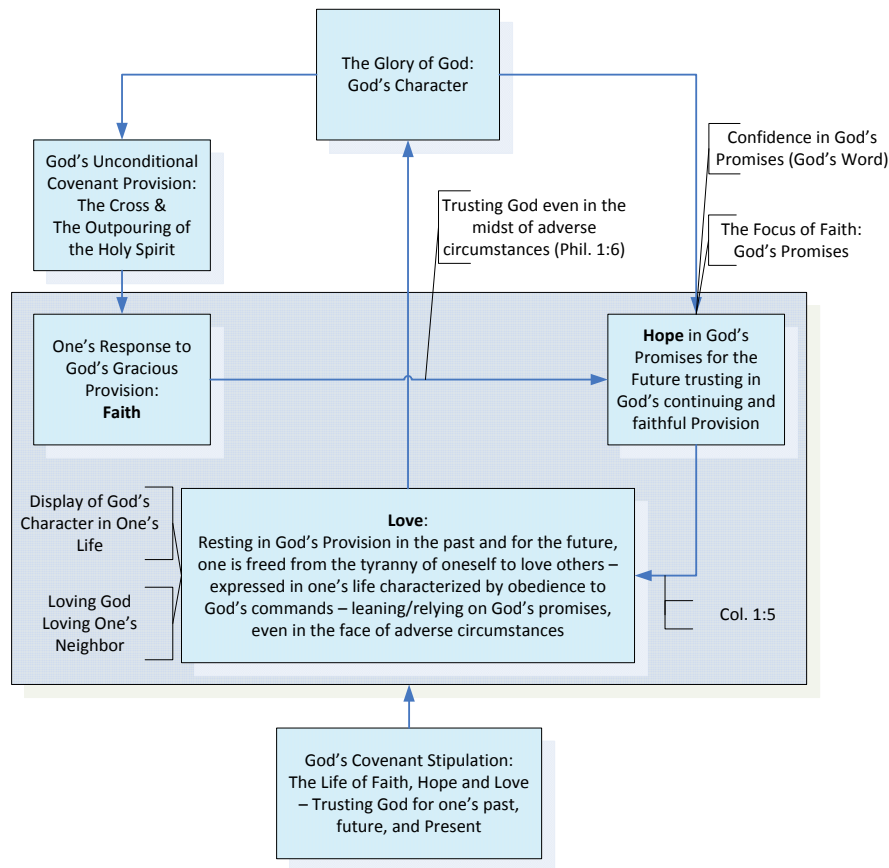


Figure 19 – Faith, Hope and Love: Covenantal Framework

In the next section, one will examine the bibliographical map of the strategy taken in this thesis-project.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

The aim of this chapter is to provide a bibliographical map of the strategy taken in this project. It begins with a paradigm offered by Alan J. Roxburgh in his book, *Reaching a New Generation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993). In his book, Roxburgh argues for an evangelistic strategy that is shaped by the context in which evangelism and missionary enterprise is carried out. He writes,

Mission and evangelism in a pluralistic society must move beyond generalized, pragmatic strategies developed in a denominational head office. The mission strategy for each congregation must, increasingly, be shaped by the values, needs and style of its context.¹¹²

Roxburgh sees three different approaches to reaching the unreached. First is *Church and culture as congruent* model. He states,

This approach assumes that the church is an integral, formative part of the larger culture. Here the congregation continues to believe that we live in a church culture. Evangelism strategies are based upon the conviction that the values and beliefs of the context remain congruent with those of the congregation.¹¹³

Roxburgh writes that this common outreach model that most congregations use can be illustrated like this (Figure 20):¹¹⁴

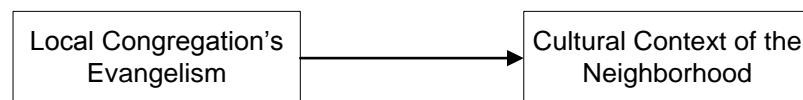


Figure 20 – Common Outreach Model

He states the shortcomings of this approach,

¹¹² Alan J. Roxburgh, *Reaching a New Generation* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993), p. 65.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 65.

¹¹⁴ Following diagrams have been taken from Alan J. Roxburgh, *Reaching a New Generation*, pp. 70-72.

Assuming a congruence of values, beliefs and language between themselves and their setting, they move in a nondialogical, linear manner to address culture with a generalized, verbal expression of the gospel. Today such efforts bear little fruit.¹¹⁵

Roxburgh writes that this approach “worked for only a limited time” especially in the 1950s and 1960s.¹¹⁶ He states, “New approach to mission strategy must be developed. Above all, we need to learn how to contextualize the gospel in a pluralistic culture.”¹¹⁷

The second approach Roxburgh discusses is *Church renewal as mission* model. He writes, “The conviction is that the new way to recover a place in the culture is to recapture the principles of the New Testament church.”¹¹⁸ But he argues that “they usually betray a common fault: the assumption that culture is neutral and everyone outside the church is like everyone inside the church. Thus, all the church needs to do is get its act straight and the world will beat a path to its door.”¹¹⁹ But he concludes that “this methodology, while valuable and a step in the right direction, actually constitutes a conversation among ourselves. It does not ask serious questions about the larger culture.”¹²⁰

Roxburgh proposes a different approach. He states that one needs a strategy that “assumes a congregation has its own traditions, values and language which it must

¹¹⁵ Ibid., pp. 70-71.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., p. 66.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., pp. 66-67.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 67.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., p. 67.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 67.

recognize. But there is a double process. Without denying its own reality, the congregation chooses to hold this valued tradition while it listens to the context.”¹²¹

A model such as Roxburgh proposes can be illustrated like this (Figure 21):

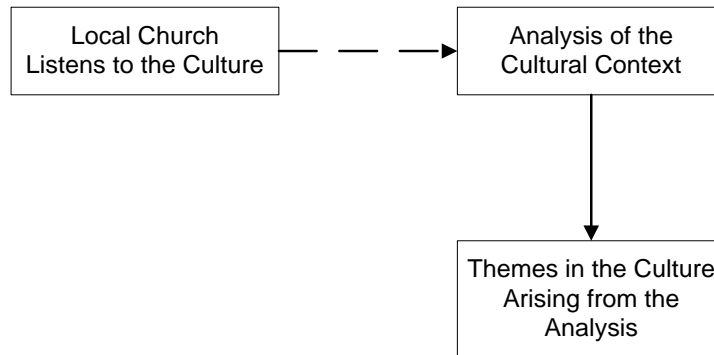


Figure 21 – Contextual Model: Listening Stage

Roxburgh states,

The dotted line in the diagram (figure 19) signifies this initiating willingness to hold one’s own perspective in abeyance while first listening to the culture. This stops the church from proposing answers to questions that may not be primary, or even present. It guards us from imposing our assumptions on the context before the context has been heard.¹²²

But he writes that this listening process is only the first part of his strategy.

Roxburgh further states,

In the second stage, analysis and themes are the basis for biblical theological reflection by the local congregation. Now the congregation brings the fruit of its listening to a dialogue with Scripture. We learn to read Scripture with the eyes of our context, allowing the Bible to engage the culture and reshape the congregation’s self-understanding. Strategies for evangelism grow out of this engagement, as such a gospel encounter calls for the congregation’s own transformation and conversion as well as the culture’s¹²³

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 71.

¹²² Ibid. p. 71.

¹²³ Ibid., p. 73.

The third approach Roxburgh presents here and favors is a “the contextual model.”¹²⁴ He writes that this approach “recognizes the changing, pluralistic character of life today. It emphasizes the need to understand the particularity of specific contexts so that the gospel might be addressed into the situation.”¹²⁵ He writes that “culture is never static; it is always, to a greater or lesser degree, in dynamic interaction with other cultures, being changed and reshaped by these interactions. Cultures may experience only a small degree of such dynamic interaction, or they may experience a significant amount.”¹²⁶ This is why he states that

The contextualizing congregation must learn to ‘listen’ and ‘see’ where God is at work in the midst of secularism, pluralism and technological transformation. ... Contextualization requires a dynamic *interaction* in which both sides are changed through dialogue.¹²⁷

Roxburgh offers the following strategy as a model and this methodology will be used in this thesis-project to develop the curriculum that will be sensitive to the postmodern context and faithful to biblical content.

The whole process can be diagrammed like this (Figure 22):

¹²⁴ Ibid., p. 70.

¹²⁵ Ibid., p. 68.

¹²⁶ Ibid., pp. 68-69.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p. 69.

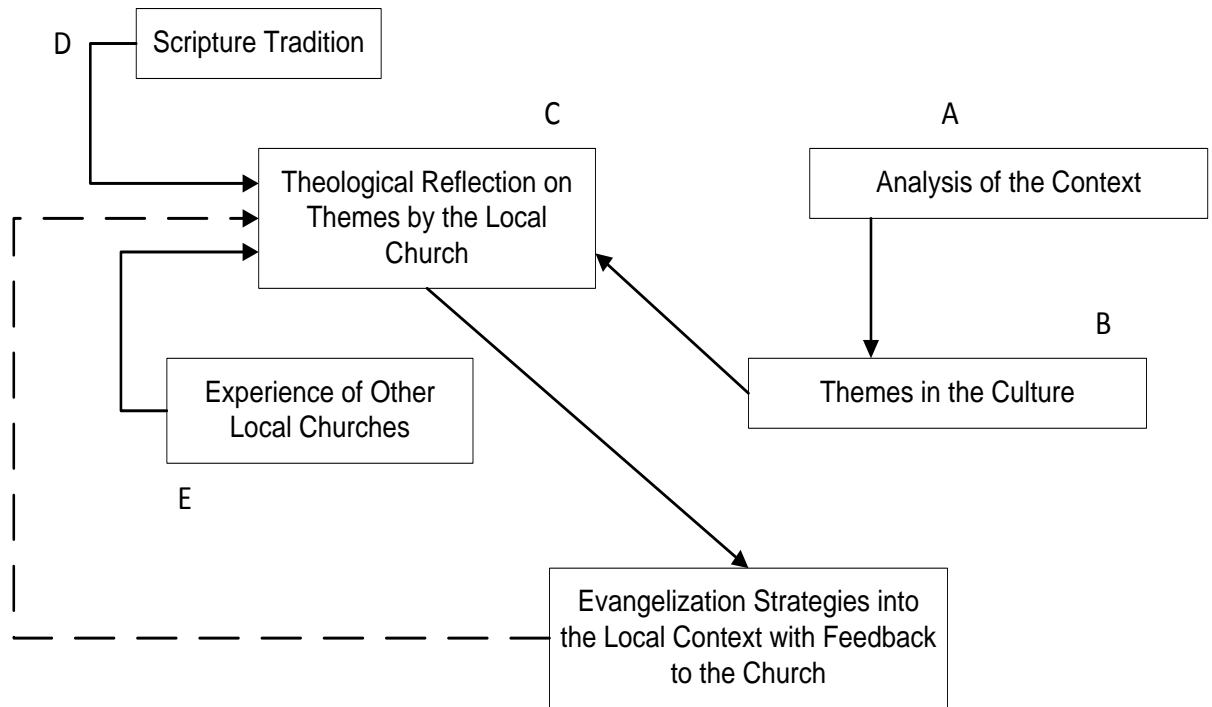


Figure 22 – Contextual Model

The Postmodern Context

In light of this strategy, the first area to investigate is in the area of *Analysis of the Context* (See Figure 22 area A above) to recognize and identify the *Themes in the Culture* (Area B). In so far as the context is postmodern, the books that are most helpful are *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996) by late Stanley J. Grenz; *The Postmodern Times* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1994) by Gene Edward Veith Jr.; *The Gagging of God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996) by D. A. Carson; *Telling the Truth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000) edited by D. A. Carson; *The Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1995) by J.

Richard Middleton & Brian J. Walsh. There are numerous other works but this chapter will attend to just this handful.

As a *Primer* for people who are not familiar with the contours of the postmodernism, Grenz's book is a great place to begin. It is well organized and informative. Grenz lowers the threshold of the door to postmodernism and enables the reader to engage what seems like a heady and daunting subject of postmodernism by using the TV series, *StarTrek*, as the starting point. He shows how even in this popular TV show a shift from the modern thinking to the postmodern thinking has occurred. He traces this shift in thinking from the Modernity to the Postmodernity. He reasons,

Whatever else it might be, as the name suggests, postmodernism signifies the quest to move beyond modernism. Specifically, it involves a rejection of the modern mind-set, but launched under the conditions of modernity. Therefore, to understand postmodern thinking, we must view it in the context of the modern world that gave it birth and against which it is reacting.¹²⁸

But his purpose in writing the book is not just to inform. Grenz feels that postmodernism poses not only what he describes as dangers but what he explains as new opportunities for the proclamation of the Christian message. The real concern that Grenz has is that evangelicalism will not, as a "child of modernity,"¹²⁹ be the last one defending what he considers to be "dying modernity."¹³⁰ He states, "Imbued with the vision of God's program of the world, we must claim the new postmodern context for

¹²⁸ Stanley J. Grenz, *A Primer on Postmodernism* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1996), p. 2

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 10.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p. 10.

Christ by embodying the Christian faith in ways that the new generation can understand.”¹³¹

While rejecting the postmodernism’s belief that “there is no unifying center to reality,”¹³² Grenz proposes the following. He calls for the rejection of the Modernity’s thesis that 1) knowledge is good, 2) truth is certain and purely rational, and that 3) knowledge is objective. He tells us, Christians must, along with postmodernists, 1) affirm that one needs to take a “cautious, even distrustful stance toward human reason,” 2) “commend the postmodern questioning of the Enlightenment assumption that knowledge is objective and hence dispassionate,” and 3) “affirm the postmodern rejection of the Enlightenment assumption that knowledge is inherently good”.¹³³

Further, utilizing his proposal, Grenz advances a way forward. He suggests that Christians must “embody the gospel in a manner that is *post-individualistic, post-rationalistic, post-dualistic, and post-noeticentric*.”¹³⁴ One can agree with the author that there is much to be learned and much opportunities to be taken with postmodernism. And one must applaud his commitment to preserving the unifying meta-narrative. However, one cannot get away from feeling that the author gives too much ground to the worldview which so readily absolutizes denial of any absolutes. Although he seem very careful with the balancing act of not giving too much to postmodernism and rejecting enough of modernism, one cannot help but wonder what will be the standard

¹³¹ Ibid., p. 10.

¹³² Ibid., p. 164.

¹³³ See Grenz, pp. 6-8; 165-66.

¹³⁴ See pp. 167-174.

of measurement by which he will walk the fine line between modernity and postmodernity.

In his book, *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture*, Gene Edward Veith Jr. takes a different approach. He gives the reader a guided tour of “the contemporary landscape – its dominant ideas, its art forms, its social configurations, and its spiritual assumptions.”¹³⁵ Observing the polls and statistics available, Veith starts the book by giving the reader a glimpse into what is going on in the present cultural landscape. He concludes that the sweeping changes in values and cultural landscape point to an emergence of the new worldview bringing “change that promises to be greater than the invention of the printing press, greater than the Industrial Revolution.”¹³⁶ And he challenges Christians not to be blind to the magnitude of this change.

Veith reminds the reader that, “the church has always had to confront its culture and to exist in tension with the world.”¹³⁷ Further, he charges, “to ignore the culture is to risk irrelevance; to accept the culture uncritically is to risk syncretism and unfaithfulness.”¹³⁸ Hence, he charts a middle course. He wants the readers to take the “orthodox Christian” position – to be part of the culture, yet, countering the culture, “proclaiming God’s law and gospel to society’s very inadequacies and points of need.”¹³⁹

¹³⁵ Gene Edward Veith Jr., *Postmodern Times: A Christian Guide to Contemporary Thought and Culture* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 1994), p. xii.

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 18.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. xii.

¹³⁸ Ibid., p. xii.

¹³⁹ Ibid., p. xii.

The central thesis of the book is that Christians must, as they engage the culture, be able to distinguish postmodernism from being postmodern. He states, “In this book I am critical of what I call ‘postmodernism,’ although I see promise in being ‘postmodern.’”¹⁴⁰ However, this distinction, viewing postmodernism as the dangers that the author sees inherent in postmodernity and postmodern as opportunities afforded by the rising worldview, is somewhat artificial and at times too confusing to be truly helpful.

Veith, however, is an able guide. He first gives the reader a historical framework, a map, to work with. He gives a guided tour of the history of the rise of the new worldview –postmodernism. He traces the history of ideas and worldviews from before the premodern to the modern period and to the postmodern. Along the way, he is quick to point out important developments that set the stage for the emergence of the postmodern worldview. He wants to alert readers to the fact that although Christianity’s enemy, modernity, is in decline, that does not mean they should let their guards down – for postmodernity presents new challenges and a battle of a different sort for Christianity.

Hence, Veith spends a substantial amount of time giving the reader a detailed look at the subject at hand –postmodernism: its rise from modernity, its component features of deconstructionism, and its absolute stance on denial of all things absolute. Having given the reader a better understanding of postmodernism, he moves to show the pervasiveness of the postmodern influence. He shows its influence in the arts – fine

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., p. xiii.

arts, performing arts, architecture, mass media and literature, and also in other aspects of society – politics, economics and every day social change.

Veith's discussions are informative and eye opening on many fronts. But one of the sections that is little lacking is Veith's section on politics. While Veith is quick to give a verdict on Marxism and Fascism, he is rather uncritical of the system of government that runs The United States – democracy. However, that is only a minor shortcoming in a book that serves overall as a wonderful guide for pastors and teachers who do not have a lot of time for reading through a lot of technical details. The book is a more than adequate guide to what is going on in the cultural landscape.

In his book, *The Gagging of God*, author D. A. Carson does not directly deal with the subject of postmodernism but focuses on one of the more fundamental elements that characterizes postmodernism namely pluralism.

Carson gives three reasons for writing his book: 1) The "ever present need to understand one's own culture, 2) his experience as a Christian teacher watching hermeneutics "changing from the art and science of biblical interpretation to the 'new hermeneutic' to deconstruction," and 3) his experience as a Christian preacher facing a different moral and philosophical landscape.¹⁴¹ While he acknowledges that empirical pluralism is a fact of the diversity of one's culture and its outworking in one's society at large and that pluralism can even be a good thing, he sees the rise of philosophical pluralism, which absolutely denies that there are absolutes, as a danger that must be

¹⁴¹ D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), pp. 9-10.

assessed and confronted.¹⁴² Further, he recognizes that the danger is compounded by the pervasive nature of postmodern influence and its deep impact. He writes,

The impact of philosophical pluralism on Western culture is incalculable. It touches virtually every discipline – history, art, literature, anthropology, education, philosophy, psychology, the social sciences, even, increasingly, the “hard” sciences – but it has already achieved popularity in the public square, even when its existence is not recognized.¹⁴³

Carson also sees the dangers that pluralism has brought about in the religious arena “It (the philosophical pluralism) achieves its greatest victory in redefining religious pluralism so as to render heretical the idea that heresy is possible.”¹⁴⁴ Further, he discusses eight “correlatives” of pluralism that, given time, will make more impact on the society: 1) Secularization, 2) New Age Theosophy, 3) Rising Biblical Illiteracy, 4) Religious pluralism and its “Vague appeals to the Cosmic Christ, 5) The sheer pragmatism of the baby busters, 6) Hegemony of the Pop culture, 7) Individualism veering toward narcissism, and 8) Freudian fraud.¹⁴⁵ He states, “...much of the rest of the book is an attempt to understand and evaluate these developments and to think our way forward from within the Christian framework.”¹⁴⁶

Hence Carson starts the book by tackling the issue of hermeneutics to examine the foundation of the postmodern position and to secure his own position from which to launch into his critique of religious pluralism, the critique of pluralism at large in society and pluralism at home within the evangelical camp.

¹⁴² Ibid., pp. 13-22.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 52.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 37-52.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 53.

When one reads Carson's book, there is no denying that he has done his homework as he tackles each issues with clarity and depth. In the earlier chapters on hermeneutics, Carson is an able guide, mapping out what the issues are and suggesting appropriate responses that enable one to see what strengths one needs to accept from the postmodern position and what follies one needs to avoid. One needs to acknowledge the validity in many of the postmodernity's observations but yet reject its solutions.

Further, one of the strengths of the book is Carson's concrete response to pluralism's emphatic denial of any overarching meta-narrative. Although it is a road less traveled by many contemporary scholars and theologians, there is a real merit in Carson's approach using the Biblical story line as the unifying meta-narrative shaping one's grasp of the entire Christian faith. Although Carson has only presented his case in a cursory manner and it really must be expanded, one can see from the examples he gives, utilizing the biblical plot line of "creation," "fall," "God," and "love of God" to interact with current issues, the strength of his approach.

With 550 some pages, Carson's book is not an easy read. And at times, the discussions of certain issues can get very detailed. Yet, it is worthwhile to find the strength of the Carson's book: not only a lucid presentation of the challenge at hand but also a very concrete proposal to the rising challenge of philosophical pluralism that needs in-depth consideration.

J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh, in their second book together, address how Christians should address the current cultural shift that many has labeled

“Postmodernity.” In part one of their book, after their brief sketch of shift from modernity to postmodernity, they examine the postmodern situation by asking four questions. The four questions that they ask are: 1) where are we? – examining our sense of place or world; 2) who are we? – examining our identity or selfhood; 3) what’s wrong? and 4) what’s the remedy? – examining the overall story we tell concerning good and evil.¹⁴⁷ In the second part of their book, after having examined the postmodern situation, they address the situation by bringing the biblical worldview to bear on the postmodern condition. The central thesis of the book that they ask in question form is, “Do the Scriptures have the resources to address the postmodern condition, speaking a redemptive word of healing for our times?”¹⁴⁸ Their answer is “Yes.” However, they are also more than willing to point out that their postmodern situation, “...although undoubtedly a time of crisis and tragedy, is also heuristic for a faithful reading of Scripture, pointing us to exciting dimensions of the biblical text for which we (the authors) were previously unaware.”¹⁴⁹ In the end, they want to argue that, “a faithful and sensitive submission to the biblical text as canonical discloses a coherent and empowering vision that stands in some tension with much popular Christian theology.”¹⁵⁰

There is much in this book that is informative and insightful as Middleton and Walsh map out the postmodern terrain. As they have demonstrated in their previous

¹⁴⁷ J. Richard Middleton and Brian J. Walsh, *Truth Is Stranger Than It Used to Be* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1995), p. 11.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

book, *The Transforming Vision*, and here again, they are very astute observers of the current cultural shift. However, one of the disturbing parts of this book is that in their attempt to speak a “redemptive word of healing for our time,” the authors seem to compromise too much with the postmodern hermeneutics. While they want to reject both “postmodern abandonment and a myopic conservative retrenchment,”¹⁵¹ and desire what Paul Ricoeur has labeled, “second naiveté,”¹⁵² the result that they present looks more like the succumbing to the pressure of postmodernity.

Walsh and Middleton admit that what is needed is “to immerse ourselves in the Bible as the nonnegotiable, canonical foundation of our faith.”¹⁵³ Yet, they reject the traditional hermeneutical exercise of the interpreter standing in the middle bridging the gap between what the text meant and what the text means to the reader now as profoundly too modern. They write, “But this is a profoundly modernist conception which naively ignores the fact that there is no neutral place to stand outside of a culturally encoded narrative.”¹⁵⁴ Hence, they opt for a more postmodern approach to interpreting the text – they propose that the reader “indwell” or “inhabit” in the text. But they run into a web of ambiguity as they try to elaborate and explain what they mean by “indwelling” or “inhabiting” the text. The authors state,

Our desire has been to invite you, the reader, into the plot of the biblical story, to indwell it as your own. Our prayer has been that in so doing you will find the resources to live a life of faithful, yet risky, discipleship in a postmodern world.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p. 173.

¹⁵² Ibid., p. 173.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 174.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 174.

We are convinced that without such faithful indwelling and improvisation the church will fail to respond redemptively to our cultural malaise.¹⁵⁵

But the reader is left wondering, “what constitutes a ‘faithful indwelling’ and ‘faithful improvisation’?”

In the end, what Middleton and Walsh succeed in doing is to remove the locus of authority from the Biblical Canon to one’s “imagination” and “improvisation.” It is especially disturbing to read, “There is a sense, then, in which genuine faithfulness to the authority of Scripture means that we must go not only beyond the biblical text but sometimes even *against* the text (*emphasis in the original*).”¹⁵⁶ There is much insight and information to be gained in this book. However, the book is marred by the authors’ incorporation of too much of postmodern hermeneutic in their desire to speak relevantly to the postmodern generation that the Christian voice seems lost.

As the title of the book edited by David S. Dockery, *The Challenge of Postmodernism: An Evangelical Engagement*, suggests, the book is about “the Challenge of Postmodernism” and the evangelical responses to that challenge. The challenge that the contributors to this volume see is the challenge of the rising new worldview – postmodernism. They see that “Postmodern times have introduced a new philosophy or a way of viewing the world (p. 14).” The “new way of viewing the world” includes, “a new set of assumptions about reality, which goes far beyond mere relativism (p. 14).” Further, as David Dockery, the editor of the volume, relates, “It (postmodernism) impacts our literature, our dress, our art, our architecture, our music, our sense of right

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 195.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 184.

and wrong, our self-identity, and our theology (p. 14).” And the question that this volume seeks to address is, “How do we impact this contemporary generation with the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ? (p. 15)”

The response to this challenge varies with each contributor. While some contributors see the rise of postmodernism as a positive opportunity to advance the Gospel of Jesus Christ in comparison to sterile modernism, many also see its negative side as well where we must exercise extreme caution. Although there are many essays in this volume, ranging from Text-linguistic paradigm to a postmodern experiment of understanding Paul’s theology utilizing Sherlock Holmes’ detective work, R. Albert Mohler, the president of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, sums up the book best when he writes,

There is much that the Christian worldview and postmodernism can share in common, including a proper skepticism toward the cherished secular meta-narratives of progress moral perfectability, technological advance, and economic determinism. But Christians must not be unaware that the postmodern incredulity toward meta-narratives extends to the Christian truth claims as well. Postmodernism’s ardent denial of absolute truth extends to the truth of the Gospel. On the altar of pluralism will be sacrificed the exclusive claims of Christianity, as well as the hegemonistic pretensions of modernity (p. 84).

Although all the essays have their own merit, and on their own are excellent and informative, one finds more description and definition of the challenge of the postmodernism than much needed in-depth evangelical engagement. Some essays are too convoluted and the authors themselves fail to make the necessary connections clear to be helpful in answering the question, “How do we impact this contemporary generation with the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ?” One could not help but be more

interested in those essays with more “practical applications” when struggling to deal with the rise of new worldview in the “real world.”

Asian-American Context in Particular

As Roxburgh’s model suggests, contextual strategy calls for reading the local congregation’s cultural context. And for Asian-Americans ministering to Asian-Americans, it is not enough to analyze the broader general context, reading the cultural context well involves reading the Asian-American cultural context.

An essay that serves as a great introduction to Asian-American contexts is found in Tom Lin’s Bible study booklet, *Losing Face and Finding Grace* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1996). A short essay by David Gibbons, offered as an introduction to the booklet, is informative and a great place to get one’s feet wet in understanding the Asian-American context.

Another great book that gives a more comprehensive introduction to Asian-American ministry context is *Pursuing the Pearl: A Comprehensive Resource for Multi-Asian Ministry* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press, 1999) by Ken Fong, the Senior Pastor of Evergreen Baptist Church of Los Angeles. As the subtitle suggests, Ken Fong really does try to provide the reader with comprehensive resource. Fong’s book is a great place for those trying to get a handle on Asian-American context.

But the book that really gives a window into the problems and issues that Asian-Americans struggle with is *Following Jesus without Dishonoring Your Parents* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1998) by an Asian American Team from InterVarsity.

Particularly helpful for this thesis-project were charts contrasting Asian and Western cultural values, and highlighting Confucianism as the dominant worldview of Asians.

Another essay that is also illuminating is a chapter “Reaching Out to Postmodern Asian-Americans” in *Telling the Truth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000) edited by D. A. Carson. This essay is one of few essays that shed any light on Asian-Americans and postmodernism. The statement that is particularly illuminating is,

It would seem, then, that the extent to which a given people group might be affected by postmodernity would be determined partly by the extent to which that group has participated and invested in modernity. ... How about Asian-Americans? ...most Asian-Americans have intentionally embraced modernity and what it promises.¹⁵⁷

The authors of the essay, Peter Cha and Greg Jao, give “another reason why Asian-Americans might be very susceptible to various postmodern influences.”¹⁵⁸ They state the reason is because Asian-Americans are very much involved in what sociologist like Peter Berger calls ‘institutional carriers’ such as media – movies, TV, the music, and higher education.¹⁵⁹

Cha and Jao also provide a model for engaging and ministering to Asian-Americans by taking one of the themes that arises from Asian-American contexts – the theme of self-identity – and addressing this theme with the grand narrative of the good news. They write,

¹⁵⁷ Peter Cha and Greg Jao, “Reaching Out to Postmodern Asian-Americans” in D. A. Carson, ed., *Telling the Truth* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000), p. 225.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 225.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., pp. 225-227.

How can the church assist Asian-American postmoderns with their critical task of understanding who and what they are? Indeed, one important way is to provide “a larger purposive narrative” that serves as a context in which our individual narratives can find their rightful place. In contextless postmodernity, providing a firm and meaningful context in which Asian-American young people can situate their own stories is no small service.¹⁶⁰

Themes in the Culture

When one analyzes the postmodern culture, one finds that postmodern culture is characterized by:¹⁶¹

1. The objectivity of knowledge is denied – Whether the knower is conditioned by the particularities of his or her situation or theories are used oppressively, knowledge is not a neutral means of discovery.
2. Knowledge is uncertain – Foundationalism, the idea that knowledge can be erected some sort of bedrock of indubitable first principles, has had to be abandoned.
3. All-inclusive systems of explanation, whether metaphysical or historical, are impossible, and the attempt to construct them should be abandoned.
4. The inherent goodness of knowledge is also questioned – The belief that by means of discovering the truths of nature it could be controlled and evil and ills overcome has been disproved by the destructive ends to which knowledge has been put (in warfare, for instance).
5. Thus, progress is rejected. The history of the twentieth century should make this clear.
6. The model of the isolated individual knower as the ideal has been replaced by community-based knowledge. Truth is defined by and for the community, and all knowledge occurs within some community.
7. The scientific method as the epitomization of the objective method of inquiry is called into question. Truth is not known simply through reason, but through other channels, such as intuition.

From the analysis of postmodern culture, Graham Johnston sees 10 themes that arise from the culture.¹⁶²

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 229.

¹⁶¹ See Stanley J. Grenz, pp. 39-56, see also Gene Edward Veith Jr., pp.47-90,

¹⁶² Taken from Graham Johnston, *Preaching to a postmodern world: A Guide to Reaching Twenty-First Century Listeners* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Books, 2001), pp. 26-59.

1. They're reacting to modernity and all its tenets
2. They reject objective truth
3. They're skeptical and suspicious of authority
4. They're like missing persons in search of a self and identity
5. They've blurred morality and are into whatever's expedient
6. They continue to search for the transcendent
7. They're living in a media world unlike any other
8. They'll engage in the knowing smirk
9. They're on a quest for community
10. They live in a very material world

One of the more informative analyses of the culture, for the purpose of this thesis-project, comes from David Wells in his book, *Above All Earthly Pow'rs* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005). Particularly illuminating is his analysis of modernity is to consider modernity as a Christian heresy. Wells contends that modernity has kept all of the promises of Christianity while rejecting the source of those promises – that is, God, and replaced God with human beings.¹⁶³ What is illuminating about this analysis is that one can now hypothesize that what postmoderns are reacting against is modernism as a Christian heresy. Perhaps, what they are really longing for in their reaction is orthodoxy.

Here one finds help from James K. A. Smith in his book, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2006). According to Smith, postmodern philosophers like Lyotard rejected metanarratives because they saw metanarratives as “a distinctively modern phenomenon.”¹⁶⁴ Smith writes,

¹⁶³ David Wells, *Above All Earthly Pow'rs: Christ in a Postmodern World* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2005), p. 30.

¹⁶⁴ James K. A. Smith, *Who's Afraid of Postmodernism: Taking Derrida, Lyotard, and Foucault to Church* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2006), p. 65.

The central tension for Lyotard is not between big stories and little stories or global narratives versus local narratives. Instead, he formulates the tension as a conflict between science and narratives: when judged by the criteria of modern science, stories and narratives are little more than fables. When pushed, however, science must legitimate itself... At the heart of the postmodern critique of modernity is an unveiling of the way that science – which is so critical of the “fables” of narratives – is itself grounded in a narrative. What modernity did not recognize about itself was the way in which narrative infiltrated science.¹⁶⁵

What Smith seems to be stating is that Lyotard was not rejecting metanarrative itself but the metanarrative of modernism. He writes,

In particular, we must note that the postmodern critique is not aimed at metanarratives because they are really grounded in narratives; on the contrary, the problem with metanarratives is that they do not own up to their own mythic ground. Postmodernism is not incredulity toward narrative or myth; on the contrary, it unveils that all knowledge is grounded in such.¹⁶⁶

Another piece of the puzzle comes from David Naugle in his book, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002). He writes,

Thus the wisdom of the ages, going all the way back to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle, would suggest that the development of the human mind and consciousness is a function of the weightiness of stories and their plots, their characters, their denouements, and their overall explanations of things. As a proponent of this perspective, Bettelheim has argued that fairy tales and myths are the basic means by which children fashion and refashion their worlds. This is largely true because, in his estimation, such tales and myths are concerned with basic questions of life: “Who am I? Where did I come from? How did the world come into being? Who created man and all the animals? What is the purpose of life?”¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., pp. 65-66.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 69.

¹⁶⁷ David Naugle, *Worldview: The History of a Concept* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), pp. 297-298.

Naugle also writes something very illuminating for understanding the downfall of modernity and the rise of postmodernism,

...the architects of the modern project did their best to rid *homo narrator* of their troublesome tales and banish them from cultural significance. ... But Enlightenment denarrativization came at a high human cost... Consequently, modern humanity, “untutored by myth,” is famished and in search for any narrative morsel on which to feed itself, as the frenzied activities and compulsions of contemporary life indicate. “And now the mythless man stands eternally hungry, surrounded by all past ages, and digs and grubs for roots, even if he has to dig for them among the remotest antiquities...”¹⁶⁸

Naugle gives the reader a clue to the way out of this postmodern puzzle with Alasdair MacIntyre’s illuminating statement,

“A central thesis then begins to emerge: man is in his actions and practice, as well as in his fictions, essentially a story-telling animal. He is not essentially, but becomes through his history, a teller of stories that aspire to truth. But the key question for men is not about their own authorship; I can only answer the question ‘What am I to do’ if I can answer the prior question ‘Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?’”¹⁶⁹

What Naugle points out and the above statement of Alasdair MacIntyre makes clear is that there is a hunger for a grand narrative that will enable people to answer questions such as: who am I? where am I going? What is needed is a grand narrative that will help people make sense of their lives.

Scriptural Tradition

As for Scriptural Tradition, one cannot find a better deposit of material where one can interact with the saints throughout the centuries than through creeds, confessions, and various historical and systematic theologies. When one recognizes that

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., pp. 299-300.

¹⁶⁹ Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory*, 2nd ed. (Notre Dame, Ind.: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984), pp. 204-25. Cited in David Naugle, p. 301.

the creeds, confessions and various historical and systematic theologies are not propositional truth written down in an academic ivory tower somewhere but are results of real people in real contexts of the past dealing with heresies and erroneous doctrines, one finds that they are valuable in providing a model of how the theologians of the past did theology in their contexts. One also recognizes that creeds and confessions provide sound boundaries for orthodoxy.

Experience of Other Local Churches

While creeds, confessions and various historical systematic theologies are an excellent source to interact with, there also has to be recognition that they are not inspired Scripture. Creeds, confessions and various systematic theologies can serve as a model of theology done in their own contexts that one can dialogue with. And they can serve to draw the boundaries of orthodoxy. But there also has to be a flexibility to challenge to reaffirm historic confessions or to correct them in light of new insights and information. The recent move from systematic theology to more emphasis on the discipline of biblical theology seems to point in this direction.

When one looks at the structure of systematic theology, it is usually synchronic and based on seven focal points: the Word of God, God, The God, Humanity, Christ and the Holy Spirit, Redemption and Application of Redemption, Church, and Eschatology. On the other hand, the discipline of biblical theology tends to be more diachronic and the foci of biblical theology – Creation, Fall, Redemption, Restoration or Consummation

– lends itself quite nicely to answer the questions raised in the absence of a grand narrative.¹⁷⁰ D. A. Carson writes,

But the fact remains that the Bible as a whole document tells a story, and, properly used, that story can serve as a metanarrative that shapes our grasp of the entire Christian faith. In my view it is increasingly important to spell this out to Christians and to non-Christians alike – to Christians, to ground them in Scripture, and to non-Christians, as part of our proclamation of the gospel.¹⁷¹

Some of the books that are helpful in getting at the story line of the Bible are: D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God*, especially pp. 194-245; O. Palmer Robertson, *The Christ of the Covenants*; Graeme Goldsworthy, *According to Plan: The Unfolding Revelation of God in the Bible*; Vaughan Roberts, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible*; Daniel Fuller, *The Unity of the Bible*; Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Gohen, *The Drama of Scripture* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2004); and Scott J. Hafemann, *The God of the Promise and the Life of Faith* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2001).

As noted above, one of the strengths of D. A. Carson's book, *The Gagging of God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), is that it offers biblical story-line as an answer to the pluralism's denial of any overarching metanarrative. In fact, Carson's book is a good place to begin to see how following the plot-line of the Bible can give answers to the basic mythic questions such as who am I? where am I going? what accounts for evil in this world? and so on.

¹⁷⁰ See Douglas J. Moo, "Systematic Theology and Biblical Theology," *New Dictionary of Biblical Theology* edited by T. Desmond Alexander and Brian S. Rosner (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2000), pp. 102-103.

¹⁷¹ D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God*, p. 194.

O. Palmer Robertson's book, *The Christ of the Covenants* (Phillipsburg, New Jersey: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., 1980), was not written as an antidote to the denial of metanarrative by postmoderns. Rather, it was written to introduce the readers to the biblical covenants from the reformed perspective. Robertson's book is a good place to learn about the various covenants that God administers through the salvation history. While Robertson is clear and informative when he is describing the individual covenants from Adam, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David and Christ, he is not so clear when it comes to helping the reader understand the relationships between the covenants.

Graeme Goldsworthy's book, *According to Plan* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1991), compared to *The Christ of the Covenants*, was written with lay persons in mind. Lamenting the fact that there are not many theologies that cover both the Old and New Testaments, Goldsworthy's goal in writing *According to Plan* was to give readers an introduction to biblical theology that deals with the Bible as a whole. He ably guides the reader through the whole Bible covering only the important peaks. But as one reads his book, one is able to walk away with a very basic yet comprehensive grasp of the Bible as a whole.

Vaughan Roberts' book, *God's Big Picture: Tracing the Storyline of the Bible* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2002) is in a way an abridgement of Graeme Goldsworthy's book. In fact, the author acknowledges Goldsworthy's influence upon his book. What Roberts' book does, however, is to introduce the framework that is present in Goldsworthy's book to an even wider audience. Roberts' book is divided into 8

sections covering the whole Bible. Upon reading Roberts' book, one does not know everything about the Bible – and that is not the author's aim, but one walks away with a good framework from which to interact with other biblical material and a good map to navigate the biblical terrain.

In many ways, Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen's book, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Academic, 2004), is very similar to what this thesis-project seeks to do. It was surprising and pleasing to find a book that was addressing the same issue that this thesis-project is trying to address. Hence, *The Drama of Scripture* was a treasure trove of ideas and concepts. However, as with Goldsworthy or Robertson, in *The Drama of Scripture* there is just so much information and not enough guidance on what all this has to do with the reader. But one cannot fault the authors of this fine book, since that is not their primary goal in this book.

Daniel Fuller's book, *The Unity of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992) might not have as much information on salvation history as those by Goldsworthy, Robertson or Bartholomew and Goheen, but this book's strength lies in Fuller's treatment of how the salvation history intersects with a believer's life. For example, after an inductive study of Genesis 1:1-2:3, the creation account, Fuller doesn't dive into the account of the Fall found in Genesis 2:4-3:24 as do Goldsworthy, Robertson or Bartholomew and Goheen. Instead, he explains the importance of the

necessity of the Tri-unity of God¹⁷², why the Creation must be God's "Free" Work, and introduces steps one and two in responding to God's purpose. Fuller explains one's first response to God's purpose is to "look to God for the contentment, joy, and bright future that we all desire," recognizing that "he alone can give it, since we are made in his image."¹⁷³ One's second response is, having one's needs met fully by God, for one to begin to meet the needs of others. What this process does is it involves the reader in recognizing that the story-line of the Bible is not some remote information to be learned but a narrative setting to be participated in. Fuller is helpful in involving the reader not by giving a lot of information but by pointing to the inner dynamic that is at work.

Scott Hafemann's book, *The God of the Promise and the Life of Faith* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Books, 2001), is in many ways an expansion and nuanced presentation of Fuller's ideas and concepts. Hafemann's book, just like Fuller's book, is helpful in that it is not a straight forward unfolding of the biblical drama. Rather, the strength of this book is its unfolding of the biblical drama by posing and answering the metanarrative

¹⁷² Daniel Fuller, *The Unity of the Bible* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), pp. 116-127. When Fuller writes of God's "necessary" work of Trinity, what Fuller is implying is that God cannot in his nature be a "single center of consciousness." Following Jonathan Edwards, Fuller explains that God by necessity is Three-in-one triune being. Fuller writes, "...he is himself the source and cause of the wisdom that is displayed in his character and conduct. And since he represents perfect wisdom, he would be sinful indeed if he did not delight in himself, formed by his perfect wisdom, with the full energy of his omnipotence. So whereas for human beings self-worship is the worst sin, for God it is the epitome of his righteousness. Hence he would be unrighteous if he had the power to reduplicate himself but remained a single center of consciousness as he is thought to be in Judaism and Islam. ... Another problem Judaism and Islam face by denying that God is more than one center of consciousness is that he could then not be love without creating the world. Thus Lewis has argued, 'The words 'God is love' have no real meaning unless God contains at least two Persons. Love is something that one person has for another *person*. If God was a single person then before the world was made, he was *not* love.' But these problems are avoided by taking seriously John's affirmation that Jesus is the only begotten Son of the Father who has always existed alongside him. ... Since God found "infinite happiness in [Jesus, the Son]," then it becomes clear that from all eternity God has enjoyed his Son's love and companionship. Therefore the creation of the world was not a necessary act that God undertook to overcome loneliness. To the contrary, creation is God's free act..." See pp. 120-121.

¹⁷³ Ibid., p. 140.

questions that people have. The questions such as Why do we exist? What does it mean to know God? What went wrong and what has God done about it? Why can we trust God, no matter what happens? Why is there so much pain and evil in the world? become the chapter headings in his book as Hafemann unfolds the biblical drama in each chapter to answer these questions. What Hafemann does is, instead of letting people find the questions inside the biblical drama, he lets the questions become a contact point with the reader drawing the reader into the biblical drama.

Conclusion

As one can see the aim of this chapter is not to list that pertain to this thesis-project. Rather, the aim was to provide a rudimentary map that was used in this thesis-project. Using Alan Roxburgh's paradigm (see Figure 22), one began with the Analysis of the Context (Figure 22 area A) interacting with many fine presentation analyzing the modern, postmodern context and Asian context in particular. One, then, moved onto discovering the Themes in the Culture (Figure 22 area B). With input from Experience of Other Local Churches (Figure 22 area E) and informed by Scriptural Tradition (Figure 22 area D), one was able to reflect on the specific themes in the local church context (Figure 22 area C). With this information in place, one now can turn to the project design in the next section.

Chapter 4: Project Design

In chapter one, this thesis-project sought to highlight the problem of lack of metanarrative in the lives of postmoderns in general and Asian-Americans in particular. In chapter two, this project attempted to show that the Bible readily provides such metanarrative framework. In fact, without understanding this metanarrative character of the Bible, Christians are not fully taking part and “playing the part” in this grand story that God has called his people to live. This chapter’s focus is on designing a three day learning retreat that will highlight the problem of lack of metanarrative in the lives of postmoderns and help participants start participating in God’s story by highlighting three components of Christian metanarrative: 1) the metanarrative quality of the storyline of the Bible 2) the covenantal nature of the Bible and the function of faith, hope and love in the covenant, and 3) the centrality of one’s heart. In order to implement this project, this chapter will utilize curriculum building questions developed by Professor Gary Parrett of Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary.¹⁷⁴

Why Are We Teaching?

To answer the question, “why are we teaching?” two helpful biblical passages are Matthew 28:19-20 and Colossians 1:28.

In Matthew 28:19-20, Jesus outlines what he wants his followers to do. He states, “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you...” Upon closer inspection, one recognizes that Matthew 28:19-20

¹⁷⁴ Lecture presented by Gary Parrett at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, January 2001.

contains only one imperative, “make disciples” modified by three participles, “go...baptizing...teaching...” One can conclude what Jesus wants his followers to do is to make disciples. One can also recognize that teaching is a vital part of this disciple-making process. Further, Matthew 28:20 shows that teaching involved is not just a information transfer but rather has a specific goal in mind – teaching the disciples to observe all that Jesus have commanded.

In Colossians 1:28, the Apostle Paul is explaining to the believers at Colosse what he is trying to accomplish in their lives through his ministry among them. He tells them, “Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ.”

When one recognizes that the primary purpose of a disciple is to be like his teacher (Matt. 10:15; 16:24), one can conclude that a mature disciple of Christ is a person that look like Christ in word and in deed. Hence, when one puts Matthew 28:19-20 and Colossians 1:28 together, one can make an argument that the primary reason for the teaching ministry of the church is to teach the followers of Jesus to become more and more like Jesus.

The same conclusion can be drawn from a reflection in biblical theology. The Bible is very clear that God’s intention for creation is for creation to reflect the radiance of God’s glory. As Anthony Hoekema writes,

The basic thought underlying the word *image* (*tselem* and *demuth* in Hebrew) is *that* of likeness; these words tell us that man as he was created *was like God*. Genesis 1:26-28, which describes man’s creation in the image of God, does not tell us precisely in what this likeness to God consists. ...But we should note at

the outset that the concept of man as the *image* or *likeness* of God tells us that man as he was created was to *mirror* God and to *represent* God.¹⁷⁵

Further, the Scripture declares that, “He (Jesus) is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature...(Heb. 1:3)” When one considers what Hebrews 1:3 declares, it is easy to see why the primary purpose of the teaching ministry of the church should be to teach Jesus’ followers to become more and more like Jesus. The primary aim of the teaching ministry of the church is to fulfill the creation mandate – to reflect the radiance of the glory of God by teaching the disciples of Jesus to look more like Jesus in words and in deed.

What Are We Teaching?

As Dallas Willard notes in his book, *The Renovation of the Heart*, looking like Jesus does not happen in a vacuum. Willard writes, “spiritual formation for the Christian basically refers to the Spirit-driven process of forming the inner world of the human self in such a way that it becomes like the inner being of Christ himself.”¹⁷⁶ But Willard is also quick to state that, “The instrumentalities of Christian spiritual formation therefore involve much more than human effort and actions under our control. Well-informed human effort certainly is indispensable, for spiritual formation is no passive process. But Christlikeness of the inner being is not a human attainment. It is, finally, a gift of grace.”¹⁷⁷ However, Willard also writes, “Spiritual formation is something we human beings can and must undertake.... While it is simultaneously a profound

¹⁷⁵ Anthony A. Hoekema, *Created in God’s Image* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1986), pp. 66-67.

¹⁷⁶ Dallas Willard, *Renovation of the Heart*, p. 22.

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

manifestation of God's gracious action through his Word and Spirit, it is also something we are responsible for before God and can set about achieving in a sensible, systematic manner."¹⁷⁸

The aim of this project, therefore, is to present a "sensible" and "systematic manner" the importance of acquiring a biblical metanarrative in an environment where cultural flow is one of pragmatism, to pick and choose one's own metanarrative as one sees fit for that moment. The project will attempt to equip the saints to have a biblical worldview by familiarizing them with a rudimentary biblical metanarrative to function as a very basic map to locate where they are in God's storyline. Second emphasis will be familiarizing the participants to the covenant nature of the Bible whereby one enters into the biblical storyline. Explanation of the covenant nature will focus especially on the function of faith, hope and love as indicators of one's heart's orientation in one's life. Third emphasis will be on the central function of one's heart and the importance of the Holy Spirit reviving one's heart.

When Are We Introducing This?

This project understands that each participants will come with different background, different stages of faith and different levels of exposure to the biblical material. The project will be implemented within a three day retreat setting as outlined below. The hope is that different components in the three day retreat experience will appeal to where each participant is.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p. 25.

Three Day Retreat			
	Friday	Saturday	Sunday
		Breakfast	Breakfast
		Morning Worship <i>Presentation 1</i> Context: Problem of the Loss of Metanarrative	Morning Worship <i>Presentation 4</i> Living Out of One's Heart
		Small Group Sharing	Q and A
		Lunch	Lunch
		<i>Presentation 2</i> Metanarrative character of Scripture	
	Dinner Sharing	Dinner Sharing/Prayer	
	Evening Worship and Prayer	Evening Worship <i>Presentation 3</i> Importance of One's Faith, Hope and Love	

Figure 23 – Schedule for Three Day Retreat

Whom Are We Teaching?

The project is designed with anyone interested in taking steps to acquire a biblical worldview. While, the project is designed particularly with postmodern audience in mind, the project is more educational in its character, appealing to believers, and not overtly evangelistic. While one of the convictions behind this project is that postmoderns suffer from lack of coherent metanarrative, one of the best remedy to that problem this project believes is a small group of Christians living out a coherent biblical metanarrative in their daily lives as a testimony to the world around them. Hence this project seeks to appeal to the body of believers to live out the story of God in their lives.

How Are We Teaching?

While, ideally, teaching that appeals to the head, heart and hand is best, the focus of the project will be the head. However, because the second component of the material is to appeal to one's faith, hope and love, the project will also attempt to engage one's heart. The project will attempt to appeal to the mind and heart through small group retreat where there will be component that appeal to the mind through teaching time and component that appeal to the heart through times of worship and prayer.

Where Are We Teaching?

Although the teaching element of the project can be taught in any setting, but, for effectiveness, the project is best carried out in a three day retreat setting where people are invited away from their daily grind to a restful atmosphere where they can learn cognitively through teaching component and respond affectively through worship and prayer.

Who Is Teaching?

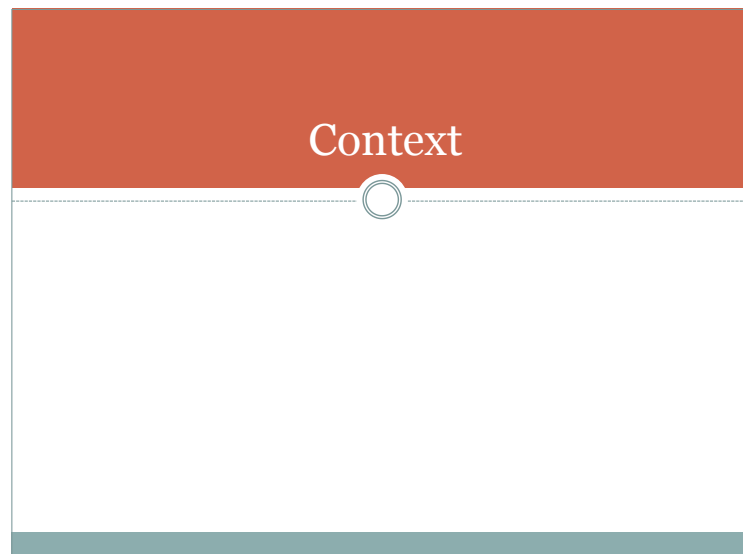
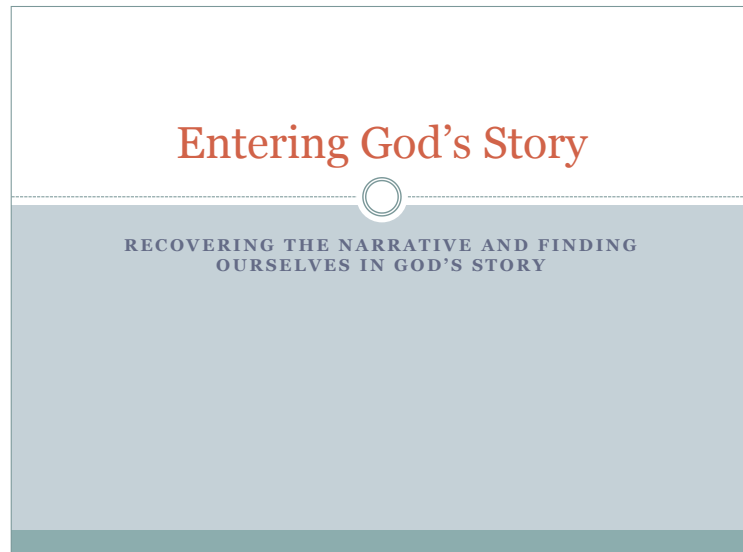
The project is designed with a local pastor in mind, who best knows the people in his care. The model of a teacher this project has in mind is a "teacher as committed student of God's truth and Co-participant in the story God is 'telling.'" In the end, the best teacher for this project is not just a person who will convey a lot of information but a person who will live out in their lives the "story" that God has called them to live. In this sense, the local pastors are in the best position to teach this material, not just

because he knows his people but also because he is in a unique position to model what he is teaching in his own life.

Chapter 5: Entering Into God's Story: Three Day Retreat

Presentation I

Finding Ourselves in the Story



Human Life is Governed by Story

I expect all of us, at one time or another, in an attempt to understand our lives or discover what we ought to do, have gone to someone else with our stories. This is not merely the province of psychotherapists and priests, but of any good friends. “Tell me what happened. Tell me your story, and I’ll try to help you makes some sense of it.”

John Eldredge

John Eldredge, in his short but illuminating book, *Epic: The Story God is Telling and the Role That Is Yours To Play*, writes,

I expect all of us, at one time or another, in an attempt to understand our lives or discover what we ought to do, have gone to someone else with our stories. This is not merely the province of psychotherapists and priests, but of any good friend. “Tell me what happened. Tell me your story, and I’ll try to help you make some sense of it.”¹⁷⁹

He writes, quoting Daniel Taylor, “Our stories tell us who we are, why we are here, and what we are to do. They give us our best answers to all of life’s big questions, and to most of the small ones as well.”¹⁸⁰ Craig Bartholomew and Michael Goheen, in their book, *The Drama of Scripture*, agree,

In order to understand our world, to make sense of our lives, and to make our most important decisions about how we ought to be living, we depend upon some story. In fact, among some philosophers, theologians, and biblical scholars, there is growing recognition that “a story... is.. the best way of talking

¹⁷⁹ John Eldredge, *Epic: The Story God Is Telling and the Role That Is Yours To Play* (Nashville, Tennessee: Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2004), p. 6.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 5-6.

about the way the world actually is.” Just as it is hard to make sense of the first picture without the story line, so it is with our lives’ isolated details.¹⁸¹

Story is how we understand our lives

In order to understand our world, to make sense of our lives, and to make our most important decisions about how we ought to be living, we depend upon some story...

There is a growing recognition that “a story...is... the best way of talking about the way the world actually is”

Group Exercise I

- What is your story?
- Imagine that you are the star of the movie about your life. What kind of movie is it? What is its basic story line and how does it end?
- How would you answer these questions: Who are you? Why are you here? What are you supposed to do?

¹⁸¹ Craig G. Bartholomew and Michael W. Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture: Finding Our Place in the Biblical Story*, p. 18.

What Socrates and Plato Knew



Socrates and Plato, and later on even Aristotle, recognized the importance of the narrative education of the young...

The development of the human mind and consciousness is a function of the weightiness of stories and their plots, their characters, their denouements, and their overall explanations of things.

Alasdair MacIntyre's Discovery



I can only answer the question 'What am I to do' if I can answer the prior question 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?'

Surprising Findings from Children

Fairy tales and myths are the basic means by which children fashion and refashion their worlds. This is largely true because... such tales and myths are concerned with basic questions of life: Who am I? Where did I come from? How did the world come into being? Who created man and all the animals? What is the purpose of life?

Bettelheim

But Bartholomew and Goheen also warns that not every story is helpful in making sense of one's life. There are stories that are more fundamental – stories that deal with stuff that are more basic such as, “Who am I?” “Why am I here?” “Where am I going?” They write,

This does not mean that every story is as important as any other. There are a great variety of stories. Some merely entertain us; others teach what is right and good or warn us of danger and evil. But there are also stories that are basic or foundational: they provide us with an understanding of our *whole* world and of our own place within it. Such comprehensive stories give us the meaning of universal history. These have been called “grand narratives,” “grand stories,” or “metanarratives.” Each of us (whether we're conscious of it or not) has one. To frame and give shape and meaning to our experience of life, all of us depend upon some particular story.¹⁸²

¹⁸² Ibid., p. 18.

There are stories that are foundational

- This does not mean that every story is as important as any other. There are a great variety of stories. Some merely entertain us; others teach what is right and good or warn us of danger and evil. But there are also stories that are basic or foundational: they provide us with an understanding of our *whole* world and of our own place within it. Such comprehensive stories give us the meaning of universal history. These have been called “grand narratives,” “grand stories,” or “metanarratives.” Each of us (whether we’re conscious of it or not) has one. To frame and give shape and meaning to our experience of life, all of us depend upon some particular story

Which story...makes a huge difference

- *Which* story a person lives out of makes a huge difference in how one interprets events in life. Take the example of divorce. Even where divorce is necessary and the right thing for a person to do, Christians will always see divorce as coming far short of the ideal that God intends for a man and a woman united in marriage... But this point of view differs sharply from that held by many people in our culture. Because of the individualism and consumerism central to the Western cultural story, divorce is often portrayed as something rather positive: no tragedy, but rather a courageous step of personal growth. We can see that these two views of divorce do not stem from a trivial disagreement. Their roots go to the foundation of the respective stories that have given the differing views their shape and substance.

Bartholomew and Goheen further write,

Which story a person lives out of makes a huge difference in how one interprets events in life. Take the example of divorce. Even where divorce is necessary and the right thing for a person to do, Christians will always see divorce as coming far short of the ideal that God intends for a man and a woman united in marriage... But this point of view differs sharply from that held by many people in our culture. Because of the individualism and consumerism central to the Western cultural story, divorce is often portrayed as something rather positive: no tragedy, but rather a courageous step of personal growth. We can see that these two views of divorce do not stem from a trivial disagreement. Their roots

go to the foundation of the respective stories that have given the differing views their shape and substance.¹⁸³

They tell us the story we find ourselves in is important because the story provides a foundational framework – giving us a lens, a worldview – through which we interpret the whole world unfolding before us.

Presentation II

Lesslie Newbigin's Experience as a Paradigm Shifting Experience

The story that made me think twice about the importance of a story providing a foundational framework, a lens, a worldview, a metanarrative, is Lesslie Newbigin's story about his experience as a missionary in India. Lesslie Newbigin's experience as a missionary in India well illustrates the importance of how one's story – metanarrative - shapes a person's response in the realm of one's faith.

When I was a young missionary I used to spend one evening each week in the monastery of the Ramakrishna Mission in the town where I lived, sitting on the floor with the monks and studying with them the Upanishads and the Gospels. In the great hall of the monastery, as in all the premises of the Ramakrishna Mission, there is a gallery of portraits of the great religious teachers of humankind. Among them, of course, is a portrait of Jesus. Each year on Christmas Day worship was offered before this picture. Jesus was honored, worshipped, as one of the many manifestations of deity in the course of human history. To me, as a foreign missionary, it was obvious that this was not a step toward the conversion of India. It was the co-option of Jesus into the Hindu worldview. ...He had been domesticated into the Hindu worldview. ...It was only slowly, through many experiences, that I began to see that I too had been more ready to seek a "reasonable Christianity," a Christianity that could be defended on the terms of my whole intellectual formation as a twentieth-century Englishman, rather than something which I placed my whole intellectual formation under a new and critical light. I, too, had been guilty of domesticating the gospel.¹⁸⁴

¹⁸³ Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁸⁴ Lesslie Newbigin, *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1989), p. 3.

This experience opened Newbigin's eyes to see how his own culture (Western, European) interacted with Christianity. Bartholomew and Goheen relay Newbigin's experience,

Newbigin struggled earnestly to comprehend just what life story was embodied within his own (Western, European) culture, and how it too might relate to the other comprehensive story to which he was committed – the Bible. What he came to see was that the basic story assumed in much of modern Western culture is humanistic and has its roots in the European Enlightenment of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The belief that human reason is the measure of all things and that “knowledge is power” permeated European society. People believed that through science and technology alone, and utterly apart from God, humankind could build a perfect world.¹⁸⁵

Newbigin's experience is important because it illustrates that people will live out of the story that they believe that they are part of. He writes what is at stake here:

The question is whether the faith that finds its focus in Jesus is the faith with which we seek to understand the whole of history, or whether we limit this faith to a private world of religion and hand over the public history of the world to other principles of explanation.¹⁸⁶

We can have no more than one *fundamental* story

- Does it really make any difference whether we use the modern Western story as the basis from which to understand the scriptural story or whether we try to understand the Western story from within the biblical story? It makes a profound difference! No building can have more than one foundation. We can have no more than one *fundamental* story as the basis for what we think and how we act. Once you make one story part of another, the nature of the first as “basic” is destroyed. The whole point of a basic story or grand narrative is to make sense of life as a whole, and such grand narratives cannot easily be mixed up with each other. Basic stories are in principle *normative* – they define starting points, ways of seeing what is true – and they are *comprehensive*, since they give an account of *the whole*.

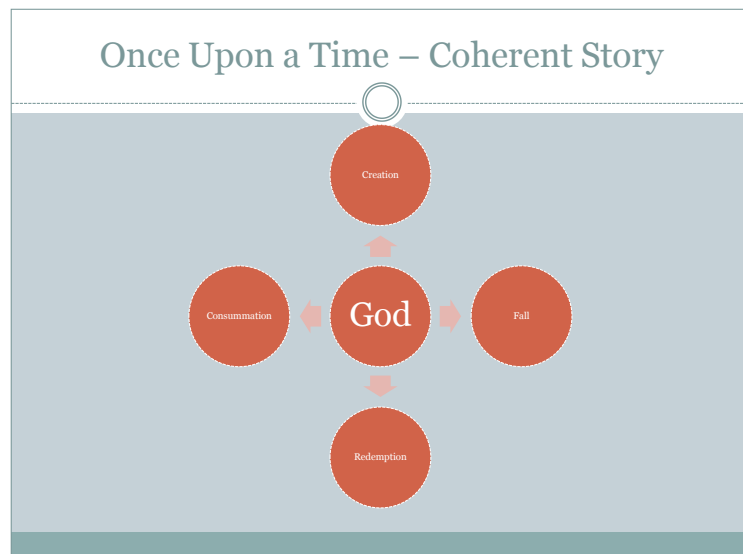
¹⁸⁵ Bartholomew and Goheen, *The Drama of Scripture*, p. 19.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

Bartholomew and Goheen expand on Newbigin's statement,

Does it really make any difference whether we use the modern Western story as the basis from which to understand the scriptural story or whether we try to understand the Western story from within the biblical story? It makes a profound difference! No building can have more than one foundation. We can have no more than one *fundamental* story as the basis for what we think and how we act. Once you make one story part of another, the nature of the first as "basic" is destroyed. The whole point of a basic story or grand narrative is to make sense of life as a whole, and such grand narratives cannot easily be mixed up with each other. Basic stories are in principle *normative* – they define starting points, ways of seeing what is true – and they are *comprehensive*, since they give an account of *the whole*. As N. T. Wright says: "The whole point of Christianity is that it offers a story which is the story of the whole world. It is public truth."¹⁸⁷

What Happened? How Did We Get Where We Are?



Once upon a time people believed that "an omnipotent, omniscient God had created the entire universe and the human race, and had a plan he was bringing about."¹⁸⁸ People shared the belief that God was at the very center of everything and

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 20.

¹⁸⁸ Millard J. Erickson, *Postmodernizing the Faith: Evangelical Responses to the Challenge of Postmodernism*, p. 15.

that everything else radiated from this center. God was the one giving meaning, purpose and significance to everything else.¹⁸⁹

Shared Story

Christianity had so penetrated the Western world that whether or not people believed in Christ or acted as Christians should, they all lived in a context of ideas influenced and informed by the Christian faith. Even those who rejected the faith often lived in the fear of hellfire or the pangs of purgatory. Bad people may have rejected Christian goodness, but they knew themselves to be bad by basically Christian standards – crudely understood, no doubt, but Christian in essence.

James Sire

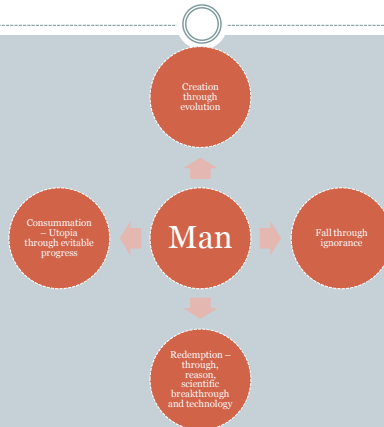
But, pre-modern worldview was supplanted with the rise of Modernism. With the help of naturalism and scientific method, humanism and rationalism of the Enlightenment project, Modernism sought to replace God who was at the center with the humanity as its new core. David Wells gives us a description of this process,

...one way of understanding this is to think of it as a Christian heresy. What Christian faith had offered was retained while the Source from which that offer had been made was rejected. The prerogatives that had belonged to God did not simply disappear; now they reappeared in human beings. The revelation he had given now reappeared in the form of natural reason... grace became effort; the life of faith became the hope of personal growth; and eschatology became progress. Thus was the Christian Trinity replaced by a substitute trinity of reason, nature, and progress.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁹ James W. Sire, *The Universe Next Door*, pp. 21-38.

¹⁹⁰ David Wells, *Above All Earthly Powers*, pp. 30-31.

Modernism – a Christian Heresy?



Promised more than it could deliver

What Christian faith had offered was retained while the Source from which that offer had been made was rejected. The prerogatives that had belonged to God did not simply disappear; now they reappeared in human beings.

In the end, Modernism could not deliver what it had promised. The utopia that it promised did not come. Rather than progress, there came destruction, violence, horror and death through two world wars. Promising beyond what it can deliver, modernism actually “sowed its own downfall” giving rise to postmodernism.

Postmodernism



There is a firm belief that modernism had failed

There is a rejection of virtually every tenet of modernism

- No confidence in Reason as the reliable guide
- Objectivity of knowledge and the inherent goodness of knowledge is questioned
- Scientific objectivity and progress is questioned
- All inclusive system of explanation (metanarrative) is rejected

Navigating through Postmodern World



Choice as their primary tool

Postmoderns set out to construct their own reality and meaning

Postmoderns consume meaning and significance

- Buying a product to invent an image for themselves

Surprising Destination of Postmoderns



As our world has thus fallen in on us, stripping us of a worldview larger than our own perceptions, denying that we have access to what is true, and leaving us purposeless, so many people in the West are, perhaps surprisingly, now reaching out for what is spiritual.

David Wells

Characteristics of Postmodern



- No (comprehensive) Worldview (no metanarrative)
- No Truth
- No Purpose
- Incredible Hunger for what is Spiritual
- Pick and Choose Spirituality Ripe for Syncretism

Without a Story

What happens to people when they are stripped of their story – story that provide the answers to these pressing questions?

What happens when people no longer know what story they are part of?

What happens when Christians do not recognize that they are part of a grand narrative?

As I was thinking about the characteristics of postmoderns, especially their character as a people without a story (perhaps more correct to say their stories change from day to day, moment by moment as they set out to construct their own reality), I thought about another group of people who struggle with loss of story in their lives – Korean Americans.

Case Study: Korean-American Christians

- Share characteristics with postmoderns
- Severed Metanarrative through disruption in generational cultural dissemination of metanarrative
- Pull of Confucian Worldview which is already pluralistic
- Mix-and Match spirituality

Lesslie Newbigin's story of his experience in India caused me to think about my faith – Korean American Christianity. I always thought it odd that an Elder at my home church would always talk about children obeying the parents but never about parents not exasperating their children. I thought it odd to see a juxtaposition of a Korean businessman asking his pastor to come and bless the opening of his business while there was a table with a pig's head stuffed with money to ensure the success of his business. I also remembered what Archer Torrey, a missionary to Korea, said in one of his books about how he found unfortunate that first missionaries to Korea translated "church" with Chinese character representing "education" and "assembly," when a better translation, in his opinion, of "fellowship" and "assembly" was a viable option. I began to ask the question, "What if Korean culture's fundamental story, Confucianism, of which almost all 2nd generation Korean-American Christians are a part, has never changed despite 100 years of exposure to Christianity? What if Confucianism changed the character of Christianity to make it fit into its existing paradigm?

Further, what needs to be taken into account is that Korean Confucian worldview was already borne out of a pluralistic mindset. What many Christians in the West are experiencing in full force now in the form of postmodernism was already experienced. Perhaps it is more correct to say that the Eastern context never outgrew its pluralistic and syncretistic worldview. When Christianity arrived on the shores of Korea, Japan and China, the Eastern mindset or worldview was already pluralistic and already syncretistic – picking and choosing a private spirituality, another hallmark of postmodern spirituality.

Lesslie Newbigin's experience in India and a brief and impromptu analysis of Korean Christianity demonstrate one important understanding: even in a pluralistic context one dominant worldview or narrative is never absent; different worldviews do not co-exist without one dominant worldview changing the characteristics, however minute, of a weaker worldview.

As Webber states so clearly, "...the church is confronted by a host of master narratives that contradict and compete with the gospel. The pressing question is: Who gets to narrate the world?"¹⁹¹ This is important when one examines the context of 2nd generation Korean-American Christians in the North American context. Who narrates the 2nd generation Korean-American Christian context? Is it Confucianism? Is it Postmodernism? Or Is it host of other –isms that on a daily basis compete with the Christian worldview?

2nd generation Korean-American Christians are people caught in the middle. They are people caught between different ways of communication and different ways of social interaction. They are people caught between cultures, caught between different value systems, caught between two narratives. In order to see how different narratives are vying for their attention, it is important to take a closer look. Here is a helpful chart (figure 24) spelling out the different values:¹⁹²

¹⁹¹ Robert Webber, *"A Call to an Ancient Evangelical Future"*

¹⁹² Taken from Jeanette Yep Ed., *Following Jesus without Dishonoring Your Parents*, p. 13.

<i>Asian Value: Situation Centered</i>	<i>Western Value: Individual Centered</i>
Collectivity	Individualism
Group Identity Achievement of goals by others Obligation to group	Autonomy Achievement of individual goals Trained to be individuals
Duty and Obligation	Rights and Privilege
Relational responsibility Duty to others Motivation based on obligation	Responsible to self Personal rights Motivation based on feelings
Hierarchy	Equality
Submissive to authority Emphasis on positions in relationships Accepts rules and propriety	Dislike for rules and control Play down superiority/inferiority Questions authority
Deference	Self-Assertion
Passivity and yieldedness Adherence to social politeness Emphasis on self effacement	Aggressive and expressive Assertive Open and accessible to others

Figure 24 – Comparison of Asian and Western Cultural Values

On top of this one can add different ways of communication that prefers indirectness to directness and group harmony over individual assertiveness.¹⁹³ 2nd generation Korean-Americans are people who find that they are neither comfortable as a Korean nor accepted as an American. This is especially evident in their church experience.

2nd generation Korean-American Christians find that they are not Korean-enough (usually not speaking or understanding the Korean language) to attend the 1st Generation Korean worship services and never American enough (looking like a

¹⁹³ See Duane Elmer, *Cross-Cultural Conflict: Building Relationships for Effective Ministry* (Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 1993).

Caucasian) to fully attend and participate in an “American” churches. No wonder some statistics find that Korean-Americans are leaving the churches at an alarming rate.¹⁹⁴

2nd Generation Korean-Americans find that their hearts are also caught in the middle. Being caught in the middle has its advantages. There are times when some expressions of the heart are much fuller in another language.¹⁹⁵ There is an advantage of looking at a particular problems or situation from more than one cultural perspective. There is also an advantage of being able to enjoy both cultures that one is part of. Nonetheless, being of two cultures also has its disadvantages such as not feeling truly at home in either of two cultures, struggling with one’s identity, struggling just to fit in. There are many traits that will describe these who are caught between cultures.

Many who are caught between cultures struggle with their identity.¹⁹⁶ They just do not know who they are supposed to be. Many do not feel comfortable as a Korean or as an American. One author writes, “The cultures pull in opposite directions, and it is the soul of the Asian American that provides the rope for the tug of war.”¹⁹⁷ In the end, they opt for picking and choosing out of the smorgasbord (figure 25) of two worldviews creating their own private worldview – much like their postmodern counterpart.

Indeed, postmodern option is an alluring choice for people like 2nd generation Korean Americans who, while maintaining a strong tie to their dominant worldview whether it be 1st generation Confucianism or more Western 2nd generation worldview, can still dip

¹⁹⁴ Tom Lin, *Losing Face and Finding Grace*, p. 10.

¹⁹⁵ I know this from personal experience using Korean language which is adjective rich, able to describe in exact detail in ways that English language cannot quite convey, and of course, vice-a-versa.

¹⁹⁶ Tom Lin, pp. 7-8.

¹⁹⁷ Philip Slater, *The Pursuit of Loneliness* cited in Jeanette Yep, *Following Jesus*, p. 13.

into different options of ideas and outlook as their cultural or social landscape calls for it.

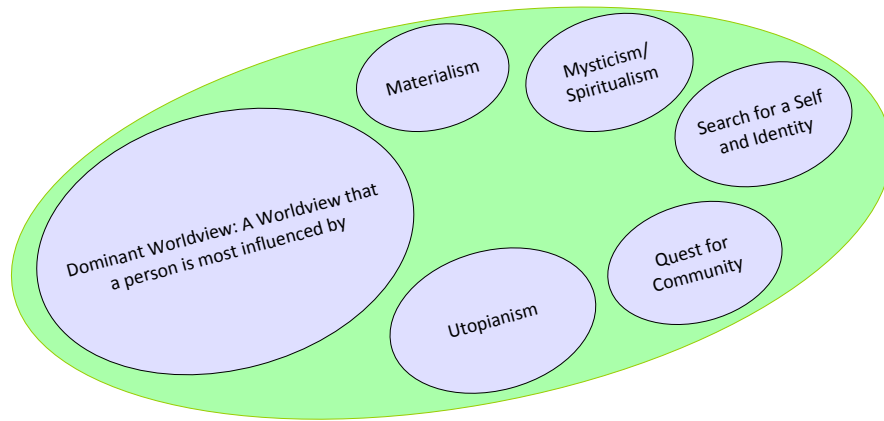


Figure 25 – Smorgasbord of Worldviews

As chameleons, they struggle, not only with understanding their identity, but also with their direction and purpose in life. Since they do not know who they are, they do not know what they are supposed to be or do. They do not know why they are here. Many feel a sense of lost-ness not knowing which direction that they should take. Further they feel that life is meaningless not knowing the purpose for their lives. This process is further complicated by cultural difference as basis for decision making.¹⁹⁸

Struggling with their identity and direction for their lives, many 2nd Generation Korean-Americans struggle with self-esteem and a sense of insignificance. Many feel worthless and motivated to prove their worth – locking them up in an endless

¹⁹⁸ Influenced by Confucius's teachings on filial piety and hierarchy, traditional Asian cultures value duty and obligation as the highest motive for making decisions. Mature Asians recognize and accept their social responsibilities. By contrast, modern Western cultures believe an individual's self-actualization is the highest motive for decision-making. Mature Westerners act consistently with their self-understanding. Therefore doing something "because I should" or "because it is expected" and not "because it feels right or honest to me" suggests maturity in traditional Asian cultures and immaturity in modern Western cultures. Greg Jao in Jeanette Yep, *Following Jesus*, p. 44

performance cycle. In addition, many Asian-Americans in general and Korean-Americans in particular, feel the pressures from their parents to perform. One author illustrates:

Mary Li Hsu, assistant dean of Yale College and director of the Asian-American Cultural Center says, "Living with the expectation of being perfect – especially in math and science – is an enormous burden that can cause emotional problems for some (Asian American) students." She adds that it is not uncommon to see an Asian American student "implode" under the pressure. "There's a lot of depression going on." According to a study done by Iwa Ministries, Asian Americans have the lowest self-esteem of any demographic group in the country.¹⁹⁹

What is surprising and important for this project is that the struggles of both 2nd generation Korean-American and that of the general population of postmodern contexts are very similar. Both struggle with identity, meaning, purpose, and the sense of homelessness – what one might conclude are the symptoms of lack of metanarrative in their lives. The 2nd generation Korean-American experience this lack of metanarrative in their lives precisely because they have been removed from a Confucian society where a metanarrative was already in place to give people their sense of place, meaning, direction and purpose. And of course, postmodern generations feel this lack of metanarrative because they have rejected any form of metanarrative in their lives and are in search of their own private metanarrative. This is illustrated by the Confucian worldview's attempt to reconstruct a metanarrative in the lives of 2nd generation Korean-American through its lure of the "good" life.

¹⁹⁹ See Ibid., p. 28.

Confucius and the Lure of the “Good” Life

Although in one sense 2nd Generation Korean-Americans are very much “Americanized” in their thinking and mindset, one of the important elements in understanding the 2nd Generation Korean-American mind is to understand Confucianism and its lure of the “good” life. One author illustrates this,

For most Asian Americans, Confucianism is not a religion or even a philosophy to which they would intentionally devote themselves. Rather, it permeates the social and family structures, much in the way Americans do not recite the Declaration of Independence but certainly have the values of the Declaration woven into the fabric of their society.²⁰⁰

Jeanette Yep goes on to explain Confucianism, briefly but clearly, worth quoting at length,

Confucius (K’ung Ch’iu) was a Chinese philosopher who lived from 551 to 479 B.C. In the midst of social upheaval, he tried to bring social and civic order. It is unclear if he put anything in writing, but his small band of followers compiled his teachings into the *Analects*.

The Tenets of Confucianism center around the concepts of *jen* and *li*. *Jen* is a combination of the characters for “human being” and for “two”; thus, emphatic humanity should be at the foundation of human relations. *Li* is a combination of morality and etiquette, custom and ritual.

Also at the heart of his teaching was the concept that successful individual human relations form the basis of society. To bring order to society, one must first bring order to the family. Order in the family ultimately brings order to the community, which brings order to the government.

Some other strong values of Confucianism include parental authority and honor (known as “filial piety”: children must honor and obey parents, putting their parents’ comfort, interest and wishes above their own), social hierarchy, male dominance, duty and obligation.²⁰¹

²⁰⁰ Ibid., p. 22.

²⁰¹ Ibid., pp. 20-21.

Confucianism is a worldview. Confucianism is not something you give assent to but it is a way of life that dictates how a person is to live. It is a worldview that permeates Korean-Americans thinking and it dictates many of their values. Confucian metanarrative sees the society as a web of relationship where each family occupies a “place” with duty and obligation to the whole.

The success and failure of the society depends greatly on the success and failures of each family. The society rewards the successful families by valuing them above other families and punishes “unsuccessful” families by not valuing them, even seeing them as consumer of society’s valuable resources. Given this understanding one can see how important it is to “save face” and to know one’s “place,” or to occupy a prestigious position in the society.

This is where the lure of the “good” life comes in. In Confucian culture, the “good” life is guaranteed by occupying a prestigious position in society – by occupying a respectable position, preferably higher up on the social ladder. For many 1st Generation Korean-Americans this position is secured through getting a good education, and getting a good job. This mindset drives even the most pious of Korean-American Christian families, without them even recognizing that Jesus has been left out of the picture. Further, there is no recognition that what they are constructing for themselves and for their children is a metanarrative, a grand story – from familiar materials of Confucianism with “good life” as their promise, prestigious positions in society as their hope, and putting their faith in hard work and education to get them there.

And in the absence of metanarrative in one's life, Confucian worldview offers an attractive alternative metanarrative for 2nd generation Korean-Americans to latch onto or at least shop from. Furthermore, because Confucian worldview is at the core of Korean culture and make up the basic fabric of family life in many Korean-American homes, it is easily picked up and absorbed into one's life.

Lastly, the main reason why the gospel does not penetrate the heart of 2nd generation Korean-Americans is that the Churches' Bible studies and preaching often does not challenge the reigning metanarrative in their lives – whether it be Confucian or postmodern. Based on the modern paradigm (and perhaps already co-opted into Enlightenment paradigm), many Bible studies, at best, offer piecemeal solutions and neglect to give people a comprehensive worldview.²⁰²

Need for Biblical Metanarrative

Sometimes Christians have treated the Bible as if it were a systematic list of propositions like the Westminster or Belgic Confessions. But though the Bible is the ultimate source of these great documents, it clearly is not written in the same way, as a series of propositional truths, nor does it have the same purpose. Over the past few decades, one of the most exciting developments in biblical studies has been the growing recognition among some scholars that the Bible has the shape of a story, that is “an immense, sprawling, capacious narrative.”

Bartholomew and Goheen

²⁰² George Barna, “Only Half of Protestant Pastors have a Biblical Worldview.” Published on barna.org, at <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=156>. See also George Barna, “Most Adults Feel Accepted by God, But Lack a Biblical Worldview.” Published on barna.org, at <http://www.barna.org/FlexPage.aspx?Page=BarnaUpdate&BarnaUpdateID=194>

This is exactly what the Bible aims to accomplish. Starting from the book of Genesis and all the way through, the Bible is there to change, challenge and re-shape the story that we find ourselves in. It is then not surprising that the contour of the Bible is in the shape of the story. And it is no wonder that Jesus, the climax of the story, declared, “I am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life (John 14:6). Bartholomew and Goheen writes,

Sometimes Christians have treated the Bible as if it were a systematic list of propositions like the Westminster or Belgic Confessions. But though the Bible is the ultimate source of these great documents, it clearly is not written in the same way, as a series of propositional truths, nor does it have the same purpose. Over the past few decades, one of the most exciting developments in biblical studies has been the growing recognition among some scholars that the Bible has the shape of a *story*, that is “an immense, sprawling, capacious narrative.”²⁰³

Biblical Precedent

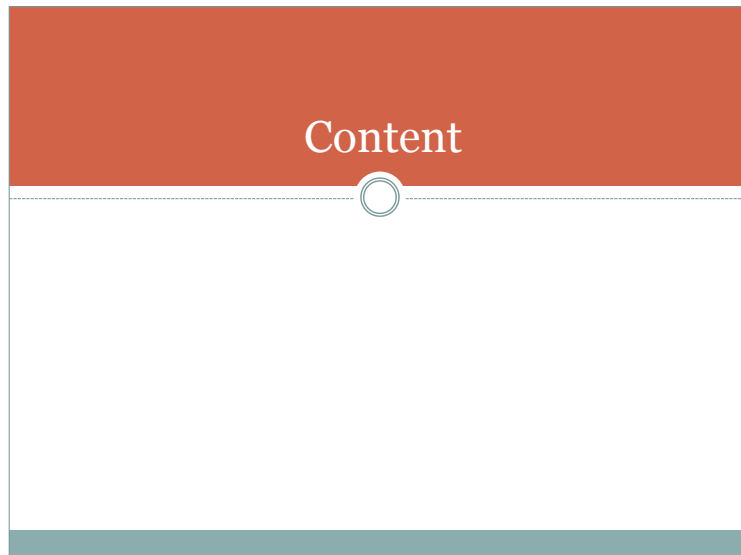
...the people for whom Moses wrote the Pentateuch needed to know more fully what was about to happen to them. They needed to know who they were and the great purpose God had for them in his covenant. Thus, as part of the overall task of forming this people into a nation obedient to God, Moses wrote a history of the “children of Israel.”

John Sailhamer

What is this “immense, sprawling, capacious narrative” Christians find themselves in? The very first page of the Bible invites the reader to immerse themselves in the story. This is what is meant by the first line of the Book of Genesis,

²⁰³ Ibid., p. 21.

“In the beginning God....” And this is where we will begin... It is a story (metanarrative) that is in four parts: Creation, the Fall, Redemption and Restoration.²⁰⁴



Presentation III: Content

The Beginning Point: Theirs and Ours.

Although the biblical account starts from the beginning of Creation, the first intended audiences of the biblical account were not Adam and Eve. Rather, the intended audiences were the Israelites making their move from Egypt to the Promised Land.²⁰⁵ John Sailhamer writes why Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible attributed to him,

...the people for whom Moses wrote the Pentateuch needed to know more fully what was about to happen to them. They needed to know who they were and the great purpose God had for them in his covenant. Thus, as part of the overall task of forming this people into a nation obedient to God, Moses wrote a history of the “children of Israel.” In this history he explained to Israel who they were

²⁰⁴ This outline is taken from Gordon Fee, *Biblical Theology: NT Theology* lecture notes (Vancouver: Regent College, 1996), Lecture 13. 2. See also D. A. Carson, *The Gagging of God* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1996), p. 194-278.

²⁰⁵ For this project-thesis, Mosaic authorship is assumed. For details, see John Sailhamer, *The Pentateuch As Narrative* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1992), pp. 4-6.

and why they had come to Egypt. Moreover, he showed them that they were not an ordinary people. They were descendants of a promised seed – heirs to the great covenant promises that God had made to their forefathers. Moses wanted Israel to know that what was happening to them was not simply a liberation from a particularly bad period of enslavement. Rather, God was beginning to work in their lives and they were now becoming a major part of his program to redeem the world to himself. They were being called into fellowship with a God who wanted nothing short of their perfect obedience and trust.²⁰⁶

What Sailhamer is saying is that the first five books of the Bible is a deliberate act on Moses' part to help Israel recognize who they really are – by plugging them back into history, God's story.

Although the Israelites, first, from their ancestors, believed in God and knew him in a way that no other nations around them did, living in Egypt was not spiritually healthy for them. As passages such as Josh 24:14; Ezek 20:7; 23:1-4 testify to us, they followed after the gods of Egypt and became corrupt. They served and worshipped foreign gods rather than the Creator God, the true God. Faced with this spiritual state, the biblical account serves to usurp the current world-view or the metanarrative dictated by the gods that they were serving and clears the ground for relationship with Him, the only true God.

For example, the content of Genesis comes like a shock treatment by letting them, and now us, know the true nature of things – the real reality. The Israelites who for many years have been immersed in the Egyptian religions, their world and their story always thought that the Sun and the Moon, the Stars were gods to be worshipped. The Bible tells them and us otherwise. This is what one biblical scholar states,

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 5.

Each day of creation takes on two principal categories of divinity in the pantheons of the day, and declares that these are not gods at all, but creatures – creations of the one true God who is the only one, without a second or third. Each day dismisses an additional cluster of deities, arranged in a cosmological and symmetrical order. ... On the first day the gods of light and darkness are dismissed. On the second day, the gods of sky and sea. On the third day, earth gods and gods of vegetation. On the fourth day, sun, moon and star gods. The fifth and sixth days take away any associations with divinity from the animal kingdom. And finally human existence, too, is emptied of any intrinsic divinity – while at the same time all human beings, from the greatest to the least, and not just pharaohs, kings and heroes, are granted a divine likeness and mediation.²⁰⁷

This understanding is applicable to us as we travel from our Egypt (from our sin and broken fellowship with God) to our Promised Land (to glorious unhindered fellowship with the Father and the Son in the Spirit). From our life in sin, we have learned the ways of this world and life-patterns of this world. Many of us still reside in the narrative of modernism – that scientific and technological progress can usher in utopia, or in the atomized and fragmented narratives of postmodernism, especially for Asian-Americans – the narrative of American dream that we can achieve a “good life” through hard work and sacrifice.

In spite of many fragmented smorgasbord of mini narratives that we find ourselves immersed in, the biblical account serves to remind us that that is not our story. Just as Moses wrote the Pentateuch to be a “history of the ‘children of Israel’,” the whole of Bible now tells us, the people who are called to receive the promised eternal inheritance (Heb. 9:15), our story: who we are, where we are going, how we are going to get there, how we need to live.

²⁰⁷ Conrad Hyer, “Biblical Literalism: Constricting the Cosmic Dance,” p.101. Cited in Bruce K. Waltke, Biblical Theology Lecture Notes, Regent College, 1996, p.20.

Creation

Creation

- God is presented as the Creator of the Universe – the Heavenly King and the Absolute Sovereign
- Everything else has their origin in Him and is created by Him for His purposes
- Humankind is created as the crowning of this creation
- Humankind bear God's image – have perfect vision of God and His character, and live in continual fellowship with Him

The Bible does not argue for the existence of God. It presupposes God's existence. The Bible begins with God as the source and the beginning of all things (Gen. 1:1). He is presented to us as the Creator of the Universe – the Heavenly King and the absolute sovereign. Everything else has their origin in Him and is derivative from Him. Further, they exist for His purposes and His purposes alone. In this beginning, humankind is presented as the crowing of this creation (Gen. 1:26-27). They bear His image, have perfect vision of God and His character, and live in continual fellowship with Him.

Image of God

- Image – God’s representatives on Earth
- We were created to show forth what God is like by displaying God’s character all over the earth
 - Subdue and have Dominion
 - Be Fruitful and Multiply
- “mankind represents God so that what man does is what God himself would do” if he ruled the world directly

The Bible is clear that we are not here by chance or by accident. We have a purpose. The Bible tells us that we were created for God’s glory (Isa. 43:6-7). We were created to bear God’s image²⁰⁸ – to show forth what God is like by displaying God’s character of goodness, truth, holiness, righteousness, justice and wisdom in our very lives (Deut. 10:12-22). We were created to be God’s representatives on earth and to spread God’s fame and glory by representing God all over the earth. Gordon Wenham, in his commentary on Genesis, writes what it meant in the Ancient Near East,

The image makes man God’s representative on earth. That man is made in the divine image and is thus God’s representative on earth was a common oriental view of the king. Both Egyptian and Assyrian texts describe the king as the image of God (see Ockinga, Dion, Bird). Furthermore, man is here bidden to rule and subdue the rest of creation, an obviously royal task (cf. 1 Kgs 5:4 [4:24], etc.), and Ps 8 speaks of man as having been created a little lower than the angels, *crowned* with glory and made to *rule* the works of God’s hands. The allusions to the functions of royalty are quite clear in Ps 8. Another consideration suggesting that man is a divine representative on earth arises from the very idea of an image. Images of gods or kings were viewed as representatives of the deity or king. The divine spirit was often thought of as indwelling an idol, thereby

²⁰⁸ For brief, yet informative discussion on the five possible definition on the “image of God,” see Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Waco, Texas: Word Books, Publisher, 1987), pp. 29-31.

creating a close unity between the god and his image (Clines, *TB* 19 [1968] 81–83). Whereas Egyptian writers often spoke of kings as being in God’s image, they never referred to other people in this way. It appears that the OT has democratized this old idea. It affirms that not just a king, but every man and woman, bears God’s image and is his representative on earth.²⁰⁹

Scott Hafemann, a professor of New Testament at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary also writes,

...the “image of God” is primarily a *functional* designation; mankind is the one creature who is to relate directly to God in conscious dependence (God speaks commands directly to humanity) and to reflect this relationship by exercising a godlike rule over the world (Adam names the animals). To be in the image of God thus means that “mankind represents God so that what man does is what God himself would do” if he ruled the world directly. By representing the rule and reign of God, Adam and Eve proclaim God’s sovereign character in and through their own dominion over the created order.²¹⁰

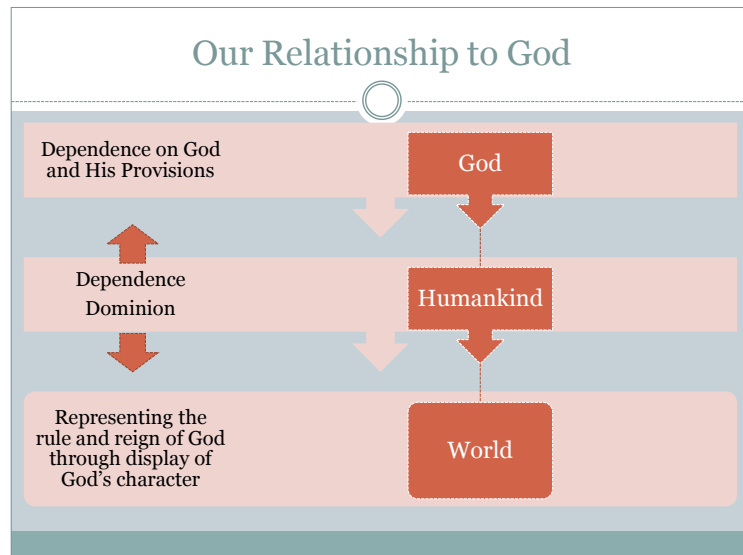
We were represent God’s rule and reign by living in constant communion with God – drawing all of our provisions from and depending him, enjoying God’s Presence, to know God’s character – to mirror His character as His representatives, and to know His will in an intimate relationship of worship and love. The Bible tells us that this was our purpose – our mission statement.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., pp. 30-31

²¹⁰ Scott Hafemann, *The God of Promise and the Life of Faith*, p. 25. See also Gordon Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, WBC (Waco, Texas: Word Publishing Co., 1987), pp. 29-32.

Our Relationship to God

How do we function as the “image of God”? Hafemann tells us that in order for us to understand how we function as the “image of God,” first, it is important for us to recognize the distinction between the Creator and who we are as creatures.



Contrary to both ancient and Eastern ways of thinking, even mankind, though made in *God's* image, is in no way an extension of their Creator. There is no “divine spark” within us. We cannot get in touch with God by getting in touch with ourselves. God is outside of us, not within us. We are his *creatures*, not downsized versions of his deity. Nor is mankind on the way to *becoming* divine. Adam and Eve do not receive immortal souls to ensure their continuing existence; they remain creatures dependent upon God for their life.²¹¹

Hafemann expresses how our relationship with God functions in this way,

The creation of Adam and Eve in God's image therefore introduces what the Bible will later call the “kingdom of God.” The kingdom of God is the rule and reign of God over his people as their Lord, by which he expresses his own glory as the one and only Creator and Sustainer and Provider and Ruler of all things. Being in God's kingdom is not primarily a matter of being in a certain *realm* of his authority but of being in a certain *relationship to* his authority. Thus, the

²¹¹ Ibid., p. 28.

kingdom of God is expressed in and through the faith of God’s people as they exercise *dominion* from the standpoint of their own *dependence* on God. God, as King, rules over mankind. Mankind, created to reflect God’s character, rules over creation. The creation itself, together with mankind, therefore becomes the way in which God reveals his glory as the “God of gods,” “King of kings,” and “Lord of lords,” that is, as the one who is sovereign over all things (Deut. 10:17; 1 Tim. 6:15). In short, creation exhibits the kingship of God.²¹²

This can be diagrammed (Figure 26) like this:

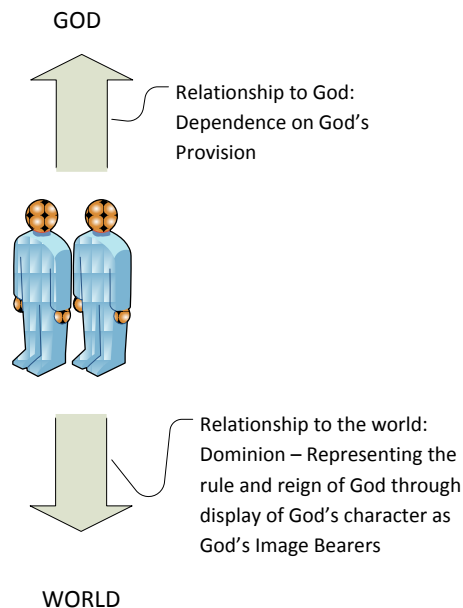


Figure 26 – Humanity’s Relationship to God and to the World

This relationship is what we see in the Garden of Eden. Hafemann writes,

...having told Adam and Eve to exercise dominion (Gen. 1:28), God then describes the provision he has made to enable them to do so (v. 29): “And God said, ‘Behold, I have given you every plant yielding seed which is upon the face of all the earth, and every tree with seed in its fruit; you shall have them for food.’”²¹³

What this means is that we fulfill our design and purpose best when we are living constantly depending on God’s provision and displaying God’s character in our lives.

²¹² Ibid., p. 25.

²¹³ Ibid., p. 29.

Group Exercise II

- According to the popular narratives of our day, what is our life's purpose?
- How is it different and compare with what the Bible says about our life's purpose?

The Fall

The Fall

- We have a picture of the creature grasping for the prerogatives that belongs to the Creator alone.
- Made in the image of the Creator, yet dependent to Him, humankind rebelled and opted for their god-likeness and rejected their dependence by questioning God's word and his declaration that His provisions are "good"

In Genesis 3, we have a picture of the creature grasping for the prerogatives that belongs to the Creator alone. We can say there was a cosmic treason in the garden.

Made in the image of the Creator, yet dependent to Him, the humankind rebelled and opted for their god-likeness, and rejected their dependence – their relationship to God.

In essence, they lost their vision of God by rejecting God's word and "believing a lie," –

that they can be like gods. It is worth noting that in the temptation narrative found in Genesis 3:1-7, what the serpent is after is to sow a seed of doubt in God's character and his word. John Sailhamer writes,

The snake speaks only twice, but that is enough to offset the balance of trust and obedience between the man and the woman and their Creator. The centerpiece of the story is the question of the knowledge of the "good." The snake implied by his questions that God was keeping this knowledge *from* the man and the woman (3:5), while the sense of the narratives in the first two chapters has been that God was keeping this knowledge *for* the man and the woman (e.g., 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31; 2:18). In other words, the snake's statements were a direct challenge to the central theme of the narrative of chapters 1 and 2: God will provide the "good" for human beings if they will only trust him and obey him. ... Thus, the temptation is not presented as a general rebellion from God's authority. Rather, it is portrayed as a quest for wisdom and "the good" apart from God's provision.²¹⁴

Questioning God's Good Provision

The centerpiece of the story is the question of the knowledge of the "good."

The snake implied by his questions that God was keeping this knowledge from the man and the woman, while the sense of the narratives in the first two chapters has been that God was keeping this knowledge for the man and the woman.

Thus, the temptation is not presented as a general rebellion from God's authority. Rather, it is portrayed as a quest for wisdom and "the good" apart from God's provision

John Sailhamer

This can be diagrammed (Figure 27) like this:

²¹⁴ John Sailhamer, pp. 103-104.

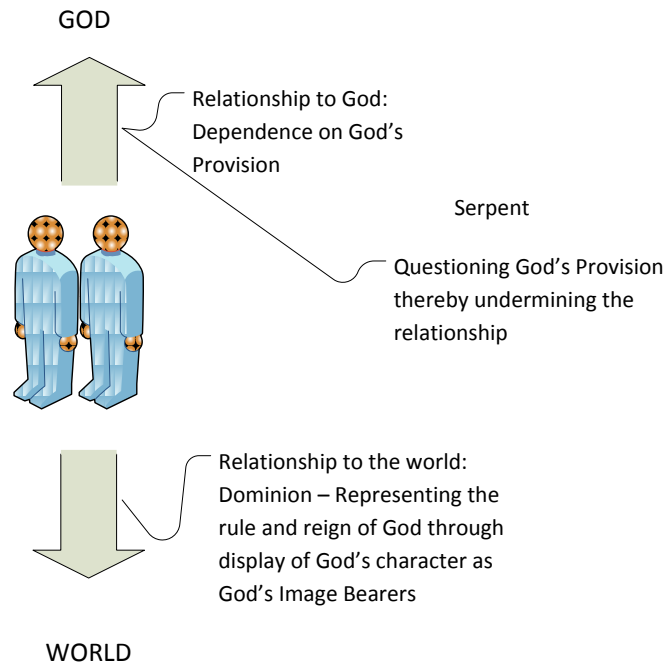


Figure 27 – Relationships Broken through Serpent's Subversion

They broke their relationship with God, resulting in breaking their relationship with each other as well. Further they rolled the image of God in the dust. They rejected the only source of life and chose to live in death (Romans 1:21-25).

Insight from C. S. Lewis

What Satan put into the heads of our remote ancestors was the idea that they could “be like gods” – be their own masters – invent some sort of happiness from themselves outside God, apart from God.

C. S. Lewis

This is well explained to us by C.S. Lewis, “What Satan put into the heads of our remote ancestors was the idea that they could “be like gods” – be their own masters – invent some sort of happiness for themselves outside God, apart from God.”²¹⁵

This, David Naugle states, is why “Human beings are inescapably religious beings, even though they have turned away from the true God. On biblical grounds it is not hard to fathom why people possess this essential religious disposition and are naturally inclined toward orienting their lives around some ultimate concern.”²¹⁶ He writes, “The question, therefore, is not whether someone is religious or a believer, but how and in what.”²¹⁷ He quotes Langdon Gilkey’s words,

Whether he wishes it or not, man as a free creature must pattern his life according to some chosen ultimate end, must center his life on some chosen ultimate loyalty, and must commit his security to some trusted power. Man is thus essentially, not accidentally, religious, because his basic structure as dependent and yet free, inevitably roots his life in something ultimate.²¹⁸

Result of the Fall

- The image of God defaced – we can no longer adequately reflect God’s character
- Man under the dominion of sin and death – having rejected the source of all life and righteousness, we now live under the dominion of sin and death
- Man guilty before God
- Man in the grip of Satan – having rejected God’s power over our lives, we live powerless against the dominion of the evil one

²¹⁵ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity* (New York: A Touchstone Books, 1996), p. 54.

²¹⁶ David Naugle, p. 275.

²¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 275.

²¹⁸ Langdon Gilkey, *Maker of Heaven and Earth: A Study of the Christian Doctrine of Creation*, Christian Faith Series (Garden City, New York: Doubleday, 1959), p. 193, quoted in David Naugle, p. 275.

Now, however, humankind experiences the result of this rebellion. Sinclair Ferguson, a professor of systematic theology at Westminster Seminary, tells us that there are “four fundamental emphases which illuminate the sad condition in which men now find themselves.”²¹⁹

- 1) *The image of God defaced* – having broken our relationship with God, we can no longer adequately reflect God’s character,
- 2) *Man under the dominion of sin and death* (Rom. 3:23; 5:12-6:25) – having rejected the source of all life and righteousness, we now live under the dominion of sin and death,
- 3) *Man guilty before God* (Rom. 1:18-25) – having rebelled against God’s sovereignty and authority, we now live guilty and condemned before God’s justice and righteousness, and
- 4) *Man in the grip of Satan* (Eph. 2:1-3) – having rejected God’s power over our lives, we were powerless against the dominion of the evil one.

Sinclair Ferguson describes the tragedy that we face, “The ultimate tragedy of man’s self-understanding is that he believes himself to be free, has all the feelings of a free agent, but does not realize that he is a slave to sin and serves the will of Satan.”²²⁰

David Naugle shows that humanity’s Fall has taken its toll on the human heart as well.

Because people *are* sinful, they are religiously hostile toward God, having replaced the knowledge of him with false deities, and consequently have concocted erroneous explanations of reality. The diversity and relativity of worldviews, therefore, must be traced to the idolatry and the noetic effects of sin upon the human heart.²²¹

Furthermore, he shows that when humanity “believed a lie” in the Fall, the Fall damaged not only their vision of God but their vision of reality as well.

²¹⁹ Sinclair Ferguson, *The Christian Life: A Doctrinal Introduction*, p. 11.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²²¹ David Naugle, p. 276.

Since people are sinful, they have spurned God, for sin consists of rebellion against him; and since people have spurned God, they have replaced him with an idol, for religious humanity cannot live apart from an object of devotion; and since they have replaced God with an idol, they have reinterpreted reality, for idolatry imparts a different meaning to the universe; and since they have replaced God and reconstructed reality, they have sought to live autonomously, for the only law they follow is their own; and since they have sought to live autonomously from God and his truth...²²²

What Naugle is pointing out is that because humanity has been created by God and for him, when they reject God as God, they must replace him with something else. And when humanity exchanges true God for what is not and give their heart's affection to what is not God but, in biblical terms, to an idol, the heart will reorient itself to that idol and will begin to re-interpret reality to represent the priority of that idol in person's life.

But matters go from bad to worse, as one has to contend with more than one's heart being an idol factory. The Biblical account makes it clear that humanity is involved and caught up in the middle of a cosmic battle in the spiritual realm. Naugle writes,

As the pinnacle of God's creative work, the human family is directly implicated in this battle of the ages. Not only are all people affected by it – caught in its crossfire, so to speak – but they are also participants in it, aligning themselves consciously or unconsciously with the fighting for one side or the other, depending upon their spiritual orientation.²²³

David Naugle reveals the Enemy's strategy,

A key stratagem of the devil, who is the father of lies (John 8:44), is to conceal the true nature of things through the proliferation of multiple cosmic falsehoods in order to secure the blindness of the human heart and its ultimate spiritual perdition (2 Cor. 4:3-4). In the conflagration that has engulfed the universe, the truth about reality is satanically enshrouded in darkness, and a multitude of idolatries and fallacious conceptions of life, counterfeiting as wisdom and

²²² Ibid., p. 276.

²²³ Ibid., p. 279.

enlightenment, are put in its place. The truth about God, creation, fall, and redemption must forever be banished from human consciousness. What better way for Satan to deflect the light of truth than by corrupting it and replacing it with false visions of reality that dominate the cultural landscape? The control of the zeitgeist, or the intellectual and spiritual climate of the age, is a most effective means of controlling what goes into the hearts of men and women, shaping their interests and ruling their lives.²²⁴

When one studies the Satanic strategy carefully, one can recognize that contending for people's worldview is more than just an intellectual exercise. It is a spiritual warfare. One has to deal not only with the enemy within – the heart that is “prone to wander” in its affections and loyalties but also with the enemy without – who is actively working to blind people's eyes, to move people's heart's affection to false idols and false realities. As Naugle points out, “If this big picture strategy succeeds, then there is only an occasional need for personal temptation to sin. How people get their jollies is of little interest to Satan if he has already captured and misdirected their hearts.”²²⁵

Group Exercise III

- How does the biblical reason for the presence of evil in this world compare with the view presented by the popular narratives of our day?

²²⁴ Ibid., pp. 280-281.

²²⁵ Ibid., p. 281.

Redemption

Redemption

- The whole of Scripture is that God has done something to rescue us from our predicament
- Set in motion almost from the beginning
- Chose a man named Abraham
- And through him a people – Israel
- God created them (constituted them as a nation) through redemption from slavery
- God constituted them through a covenant with its stipulations
- God sent them his prophets and his messengers, always in terms of the covenant to bring them back to Himself
- Finally, God sent them another Man, Christ Jesus, who constituted the same people anew, through a new covenant to bring the people back to Him to belong to Him.

The Bible tells us that God has done something to rescue us from our predicament. This is the beginning of the good news that has been set in motion almost from the beginning. This is written throughout both Testaments. It is what God has done in history to bring His people back to Himself to belong to Him. God chose a man named Abraham (Gen. 12) and through him a people – Israel (for the sole purpose of restoring what was lost in the Fall and through them, the nations). God created them through redemption from slavery (Exodus 1-14), and constituted them through a covenant (Exodus 19-31), with its stipulations (Law). God sent them his prophets and his messengers, always in terms of the covenant to bring them to Himself. Finally, God sent them another Man, Christ Jesus, who constituted the same people anew, through a new covenant to bring the people back to Him to belong to Him.

Purpose Remained the Same²²⁶

Purpose Remained the Same

To Fill the Earth with the Presence/Glory of God and
to Mediate God's Presence to the ends of the Earth

The Purpose of Creation

To Fill the Earth with the Presence/Glory of God

- Genesis 1:26-2:3
- Isaiah 43:6-7; Habakkuk 2:14; Psalm 22:27-28

²²⁶ The content of next four slides are from Scott Hafemann, "Case Study # 3: The Identity of the Church as God's People: The Coming of the Kingdom of God" in *The Christian and New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Institute of Theological Studies, Outreach Incorporated, 2001), Additional Material.

The Purpose of Israel



To Mediate the Presence/Glory of God to the Nations
Isaiah 49:6; Jeremiah 13:11; Acts 13:46-47

- The Purpose of the Call of Abraham
 - Genesis 12:1-3
- The Purpose of the Exodus
 - Exodus 19:1-6

The Purpose of the King and Temple



To Mediate the Presence/Glory of God to Israel

- The Purpose of Davidic Monarchy
 - 2 Samuel 7:4-16
 - 1 Kings 8 (esp. vv. 29-30, 59-60)

The Purpose of the Church

To Mediate the Presence/Glory of God to the Nations

- Matthew 16:13-20
- Matthew 28:18-20
- Eph. 1:4-6, 12, 14
- 1 Peter 2:12
- Romans 15:8-12
- Rev. 5:9-10; 7:9-12; 21:3

Presentation IV

How Do We Get In on the Story

How do we get into the Story

God deals with his people through the covenant relationship

One of the best ways to understand how God deals with his people through history is to understand the covenant structure of the Bible.

In the Old Testament the Bible reveals that one becomes a part of the story by entering into a covenant relationship with God – covenant which is initiated by God.

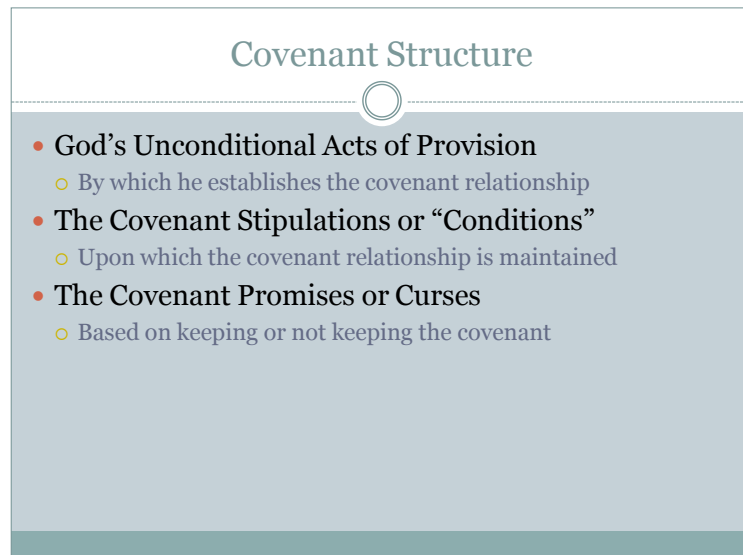
Whether it is Adam and Eve, Abraham or the nation of Israel, the Bible is unambiguous that the covenant relationship always initiated and established by God, is the way one becomes a part of the story. One becomes the part of the story by responding to the covenant's demand – demand of dependence, trust and one's heart's allegiance.

In the Old Testament, if a person was not part of the ethnic Israel, one entered into a covenant relationship by switching one's allegiance to the God of Israel, to adopt Israel's laws and stipulations as well as her cultic practices. This is illustrated in the book of Ruth, where Ruth, a Moabite widow, declares to her Israelite mother-in-law, Naomi, "Do not urge me to leave you or to return from following you. For where you go I will go, and where you lodge I will lodge. Your people shall be my people, and your God my God. Where you die I will die, and there will I be buried. May the LORD do so to me and more also if anything but death parts me from you (Ruth 1:16-18)."

In the New Testament, as in the Old Testament, the Bible reveals that one, again, becomes a part of the story by entering into a covenant relationship with God, but this time specifically, through a person – Jesus Christ, the incarnate Son of God. The Bible reveals that one becomes a part of the salvation story by entrusting one's life to Jesus Christ. When modern Christians talk about being "saved," what they are really talking about is getting in on the story. Jesus teaches in Mark 1:15 that the way to get in on the story is by "Repenting and Believing in the Good News" – to turn from one's rebellion and to believe the good news of salvation. But one of the important elements of getting in on this story is that it is not a mere intellectual exercise. This believing is not a just a rational belief such as a belief in the historical veracity of existence of George

Washington. Rather it is an orientation of one's heart and the movement of one's heart. It is a matter of trust and dependence. It is a movement of the heart that beats faith, hope and love²²⁷.

Believing in Jesus is a movement of the heart that starts with faith, moves to hope, and to love, tied to the covenant structure of the Bible²²⁸,



Hafemann writes,

The covenant relationship established in the Garden of Eden provides the basis and contours of the relationship that exists between God and his people throughout history. All the covenants in the Bible carry out the fundamental provision, promise, and purpose established at creation. ...The crucial thing to keep in mind about this relationship is that it does not originate with humanity, nor is it sustained by our strength or willpower. God's *first* word to Adam and Eve is not a word of command but a word of blessing (Gen. 1:28a, 29). God's acts of provision are sovereign, free acts of grace. Nobody forces God to create, provide for, rescue, or deliver his people. God's *second* word is the *command* that flows from this gift of grace (Gen. 1:28b). And, as Genesis 2:17 makes clear, God's *third* word is a *promise of blessing or curse* based on the keeping or breaking of his commands. Moreover, these "three words" are not isolated but inextricably interwoven. This threefold covenant relationship may be outlined as follows:

²²⁷ Scott Hafemann, *The God of Promise and the Life of Faith*, pp. 20, 57, and 60.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

God's Unconditional Acts of Provision
By which he establishes the covenant relationship
(the blessings of the covenant, given as an act of grace in the past)

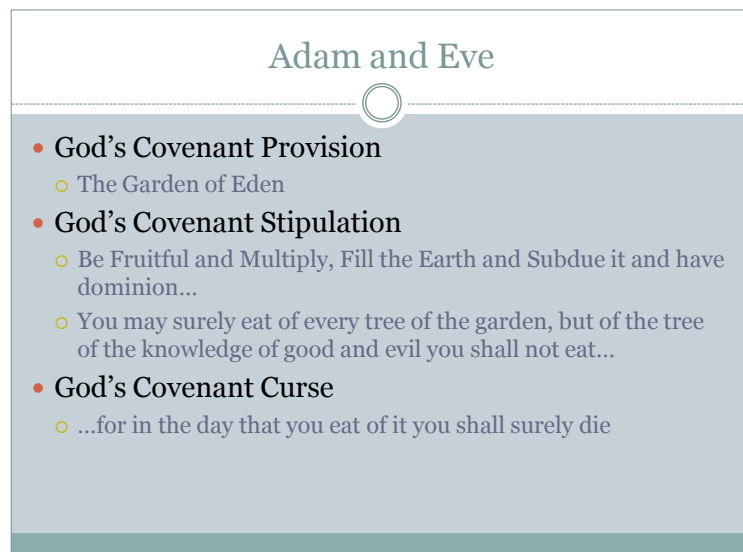
Which leads to

The Covenant Stipulations or "Conditions"²²⁹
Upon which the covenant relationship is maintained
(the commands of the covenant, to be kept in the present)

Which leads to

The Covenant Promises or Curses
Based on keeping or not keeping the covenant
(the consequences of the covenant, to be fulfilled in the future²³⁰)

God's covenant relationship through the history can be outlined as follows:



²²⁹ Misunderstanding this aspect of the covenant arrangement results in becoming legalistic, Hafemann writes, "Given the structure and logic of our covenant relationship with God, our keeping God's covenant stipulations can never be considered earning or meriting God's blessing or promises. The call to trust-obey God in the *present*, in order to inherit his promises for the *future*, is based solely on what he has done for us in the *past* – which includes, his ongoing commitment to us here and now. Our lives of faith, hope, and love showcase God's sovereign grace, complete trustworthiness, and unending benevolence. (emphasis mine)" Hafemann, p. 57.

²³⁰ Hafemann, pp. 55-56.

Adam and Eve

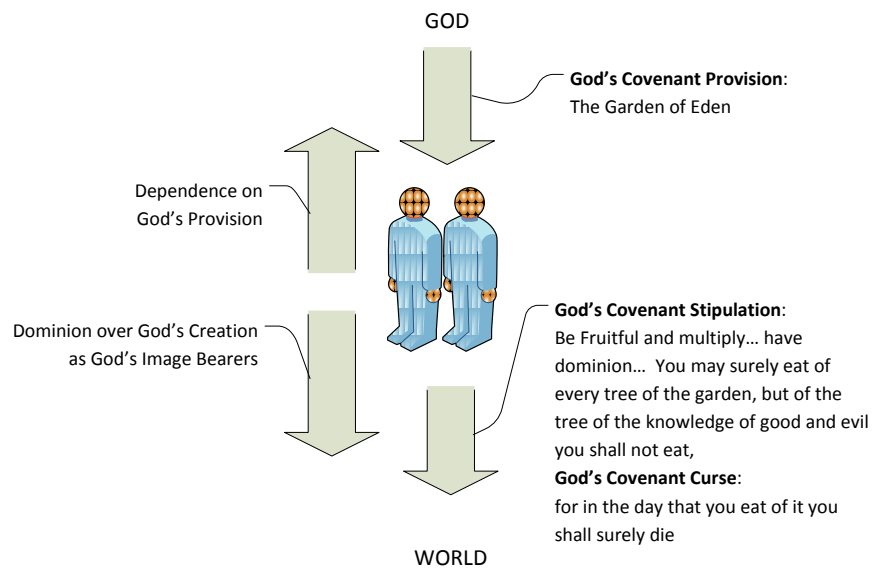


Figure 28 – God's Covenantal Relationship with Adam and Eve

Abraham



- **God's Covenant Provision**
 - I am the LORD who brought you out from the Ur of the Chaldeans
- **God's Covenant Stipulation**
 - Trust God – “Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you”
 - Culminates with “Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering...”¹⁷
- **God's Covenant Promise**
 - I will make you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed

Abraham

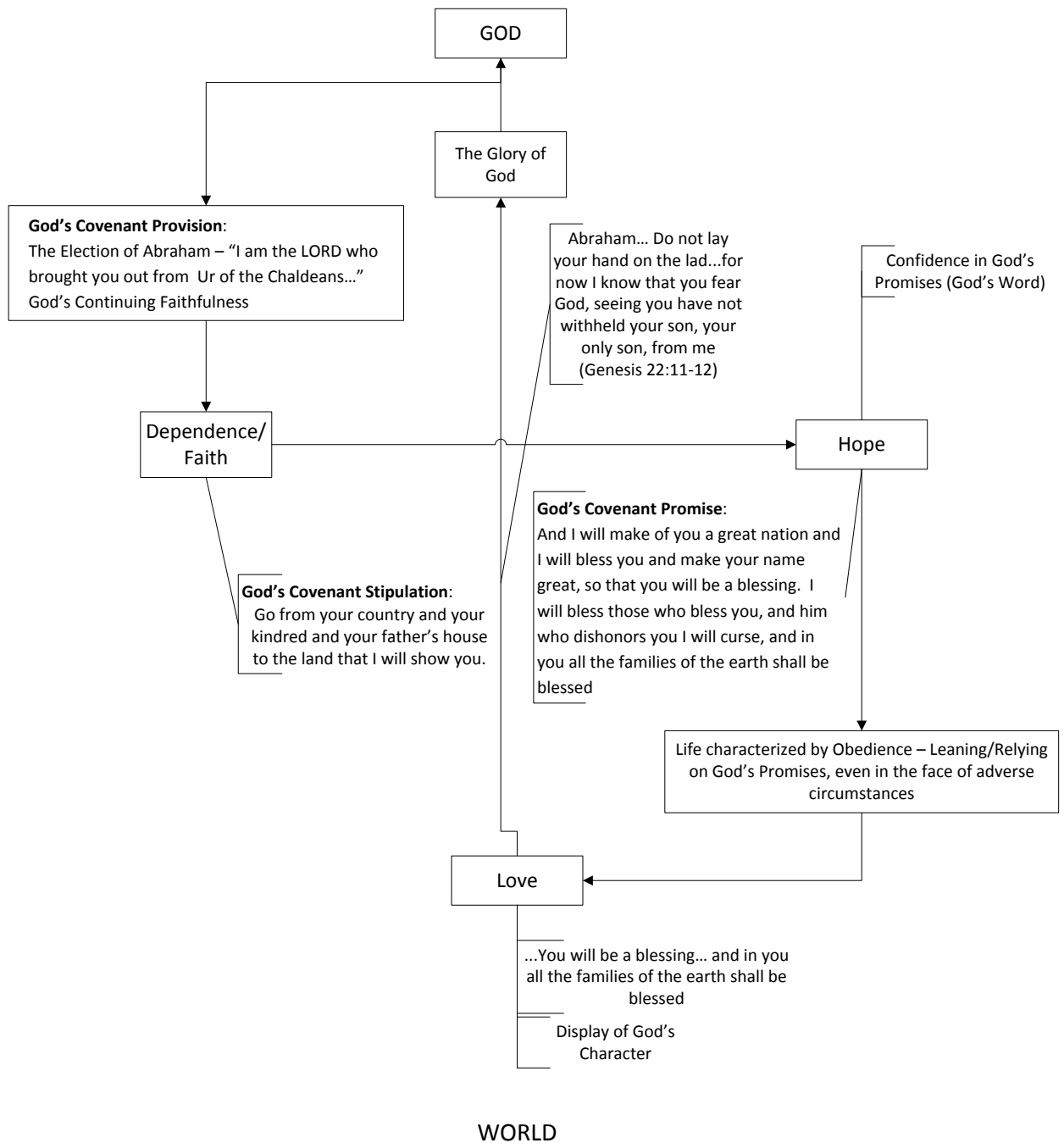


Figure 29 – God's Covenantal Relationship with Abraham

Israel



- **God's Covenant Provision**
 - Exodus
- **God's Covenant Stipulation**
 - Now therefore, if you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant...
- **God's Covenant Promise**
 - ...you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Israel

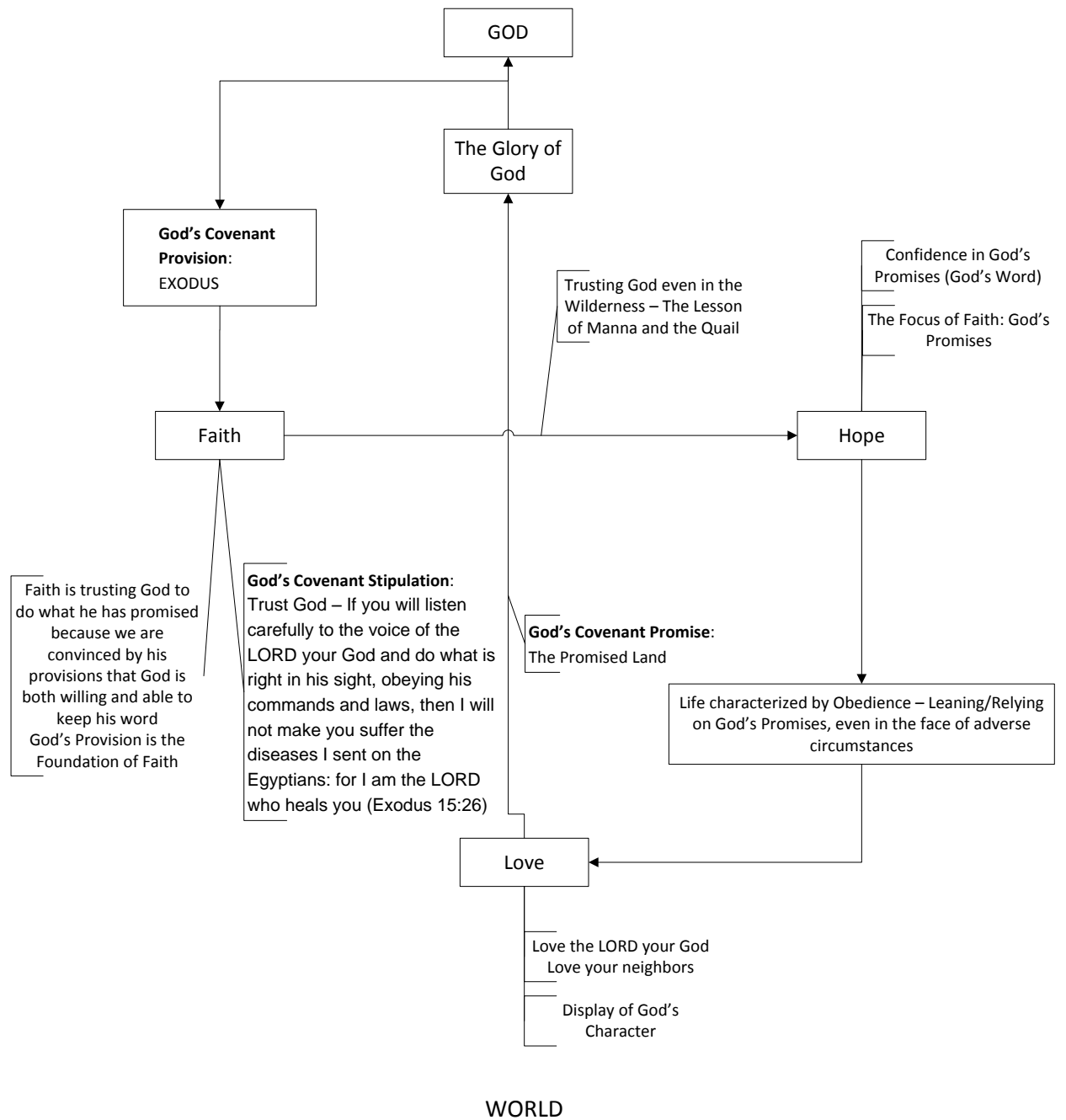


Figure 30 – God's Covenantal Relationship with Israel

Church



- **God's Covenant Provision**
 - The CROSS and the Outpouring of the Holy Spirit
- **God's Covenant Stipulation**
 - Love God
 - Love your neighbor as yourself
- **God's Covenant Promise**
 - The dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God

Jesus and the Cross

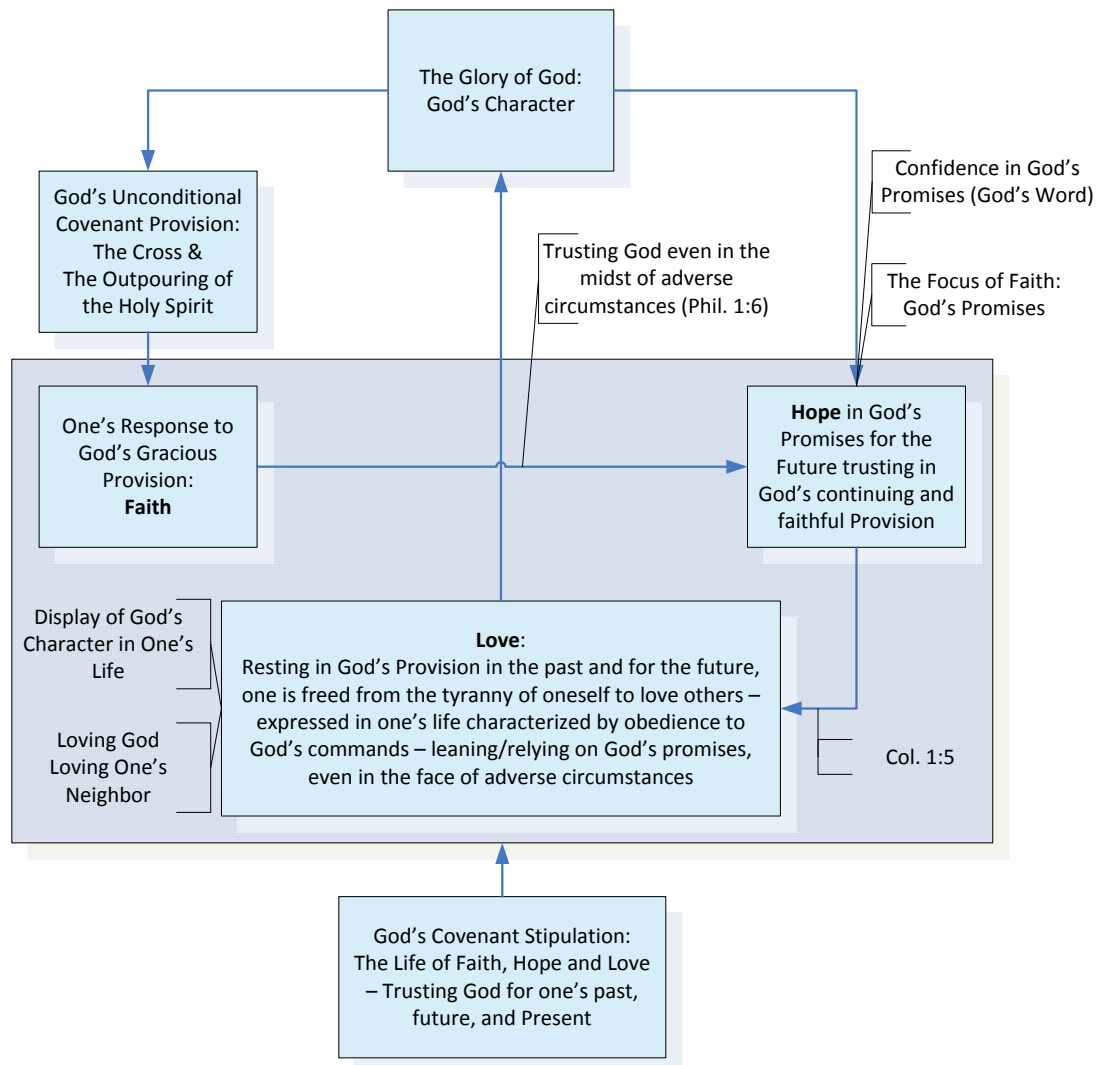


Figure 31 – God's Covenantal Relationship with Christians

What is interesting is that this covenantal framework goes hand in hand with the narrative framework (see figure 32 below).

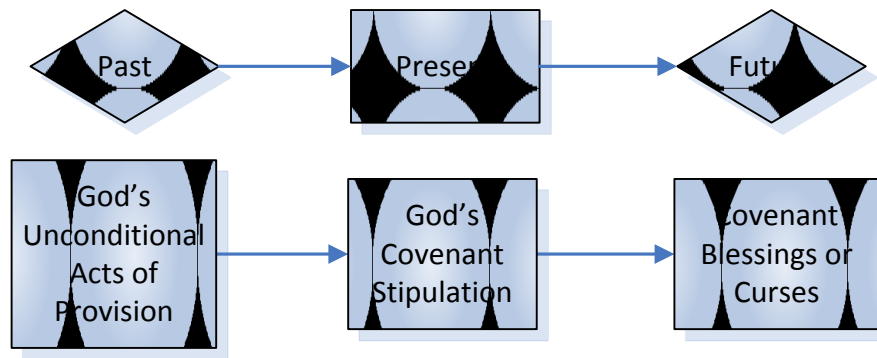


Figure 32 – Components of God's Covenant: Past, Present and Future

Faith, better understood as “trust” or “dependence,” is one’s heart’s response to God’s gracious acts of provision in one’s life (see figure 33), whether it is a rescue from slavery in Egypt or a rescue from slavery in sin and death.

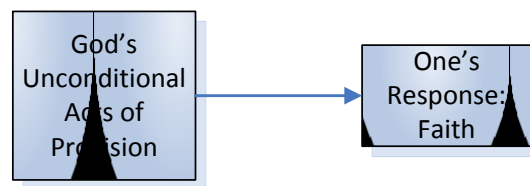


Figure 33 – God's Provision and Our Response

The second movement of the heart in response to God’s provision is hope. The heart moves from response of faith to hope as it looks to the future because the heart comes to learn from God’s “track record” that God’s provision in the past and God’s very character (see figure 34 below) bring with it God’s continuing commitment for provision in the future (Phil. 1:6). This movement from faith to hope is best illustrated, Scott Hafemann states, in the life of Abraham:

Anyone who knows the story of Abraham’s life knows...that his faith did not just “happen”; he had to *learn* to trust God more and more in more and more difficult circumstances. For in his wisdom God taught Abraham to keep the covenant by placing his promises in constant jeopardy on the one hand, only to rescue them repeatedly on the other. Initially, between the jeopardy and the rescue there was panic and disobedience as Abraham sought to secure God’s promises through his own strength and ingenuity. But eventually Abraham

learned from God’s track record of faithfulness to resist distrusting God when his word was called into question. In the end, Abraham even expected God to keep his commitment in the face of death. This is the lesson book of Abraham’s life.²³¹

Scott Hafemann writes, “‘Faith’ is not believing the unbelievable but trusting in God’s word because of what one has come to know of God’s character. ...*faith is trusting God to do what he has promised because we are convinced by his provisions that God is both willing and able to keep his word (italics original).*”²³²

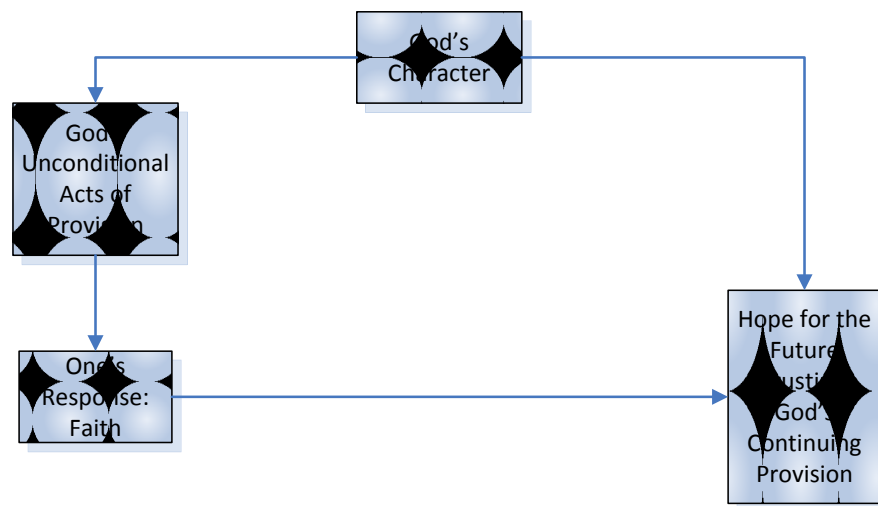


Figure 34 – God’s Character Transforms Our Faith in God in the Past to Hope in God in Our Future

And as one trust God for the past and hope in God and his promises for the future, the Bible shows one’s life will display the expression of this faith and hope – love (Col. 1:4-5) (See Figure 35). And it is here that the covenantal framework throws a “twist” to the narrative framework. In the covenantal framework, the movement of the heart does not move from the past to the present to the future (see Figure 35). Rather, in the covenantal framework, the movement of the heart runs from the past, from one’s

²³¹ Ibid., p. 74.

²³² Ibid., pp. 76, 84.

response of faith, to the future, with hope in God's character that he will continue to do what he has done in the past. And in the covenant framework, it is the presence of both faith and hope that produces love (Col. 1:4-5).

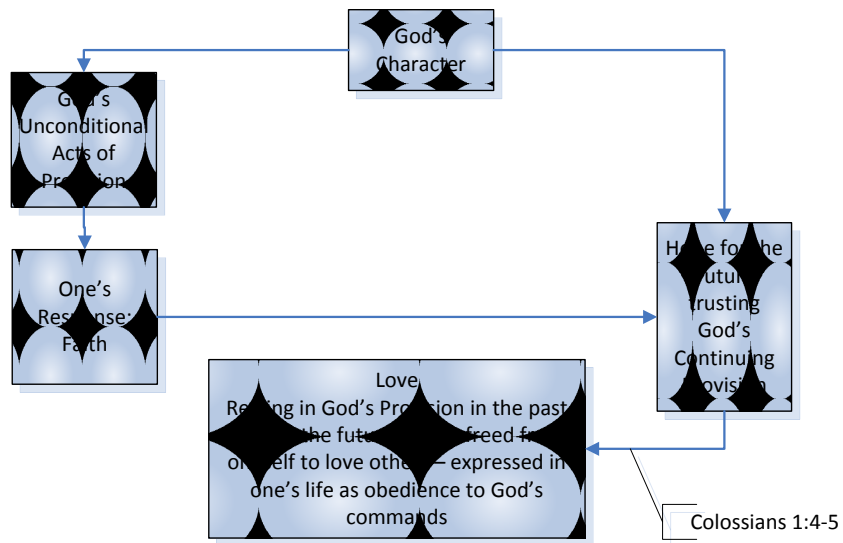


Figure 35 – Faith and Hope Make Love Possible

Hence, it is all three responses of the heart, faith, hope and love, that constitute the fulfillment of one's covenant stipulation (See Figure 36).

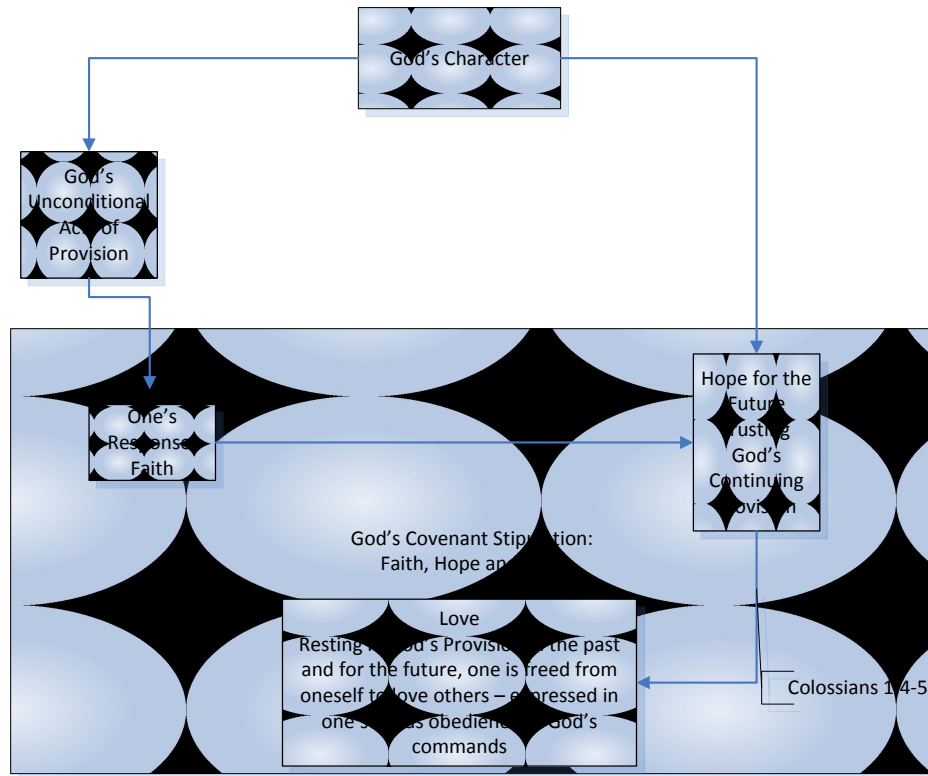


Figure 36 – Faith, Hope and Love as Covenant Stipulation

Scott Hafemann states,

...God's provisions never stand alone. Every act of God's past provision brings with it a commitment for the present and promises for the future. In turn, these provisions and promises inevitably lead to commands that stipulate what our response to God should be. These commands thus depend on and express the reality of what God has done, is doing, and will do on our behalf. God's demands correspond to his gifts – past, present, and future. ...confidence in God's promises (hope) because of a trust in his provisions (faith) expresses itself in obedience to his commands (love). God's commands thus map out the way in which we are to magnify his surpassing value, power, and love in our everyday lives. Our lives of obedience, summarized by the command to love others, thus fulfill God's purpose of revealing his glorious character in the world.²³³

This project's covenantal framework can be diagrammed this way (See Figure 37)

²³³ Ibid., p. 57.

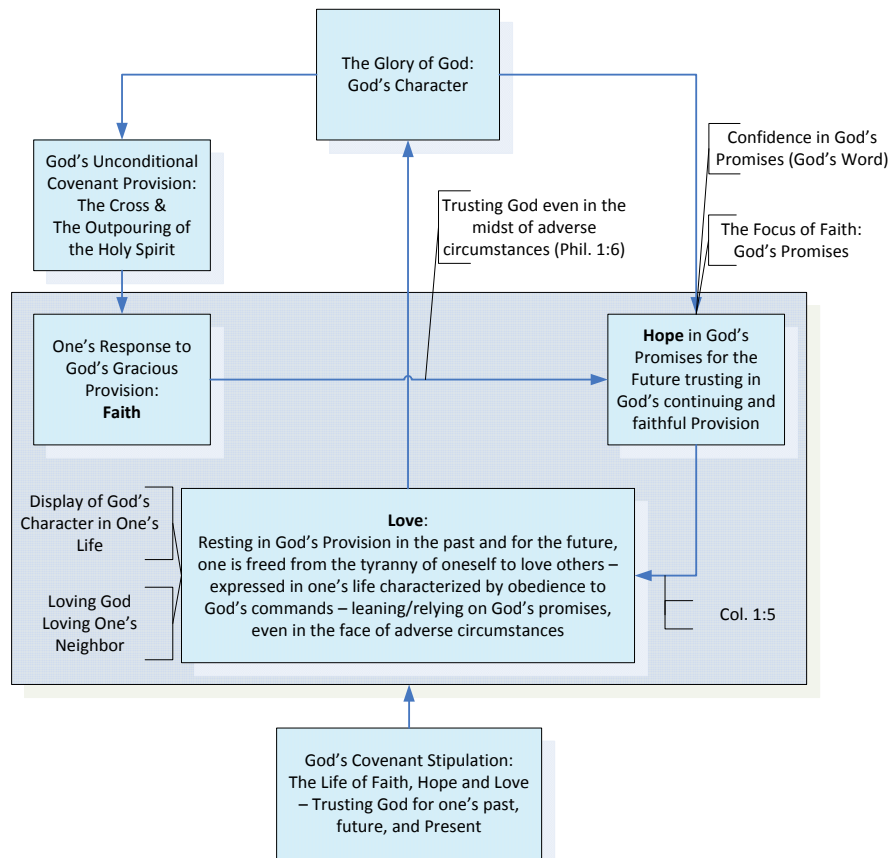


Figure 37 – Faith, Hope and Love: Covenant Framework

The Bible tells us that God has done something to rescue us from our predicament and it is through the cross. God sent His own Son to rescue us from our sin and from the dominion of the evil one (Col. 1:13-14). To put it simply, the Bible tells us that Jesus came to die the death we deserved (Romans 3:21-26). Jesus propitiated God wrath by paying the penalty of our rebellion (Col. 1:21-22). Further, the Bible tells us that Jesus' death made us right with God – restoring our relationship with God, thus reconciling us to God (Romans 5:1-11). Therefore, we no longer belong to the kingdom of the evil one but to God's kingdom.

Group Exercise IV

- According to the popular narratives of our day, what is the remedy from the predicament we find ourselves in?

Consummation

The story is not complete yet. The Bible tells us that while we can experience God's salvation substantially now, we cannot enjoy it in its fullness. The fullness of our salvation is still to come (1 Cor. 15:20-28). The final chapter has yet to be written, but we know how it comes out (Rev. 21-22), because the essential of the plot have been revealed, through the resurrection of Christ and the giving of the Spirit – which are the down payment showing what is still to come.

Group Exercise V

- What does the popular narratives tells us about where our world is headed?

Thus as Gordon Fee, a professor of New Testament at Regent College, points out, “the Bible is God’s story, whose protagonist throughout is God himself, whose creative and redemptive activity both reveals his character and explains our participation in the story.”²³⁴ It is this story that we are invited to participate in. This story is not just the story of people in the Bible. Rather, the Bible tells us that it is our story (Rom. 9:7; Gal. 3:7, 29). We are not only inheritors of this story that must shape us but we are also its participants.

²³⁴ Gordon Fee, Lecture 13.3.

Chapter 6: Reflection

In many ways, for me, it all began with reading Lesslie Newbigin's account of living as a missionary in India, perhaps one of the most pluralistic countries in the world. Newbigin's account opened my eyes to see the importance of shared metanarrative – the story that informs how people see themselves in their culture and live as part of that culture. His account also made me realize the importance of having the right metanarrative as a Christian. It is possible, I came to see, for one metanarrative to subvert and transform rival metanarratives so that only one more fundamental metanarrative will govern how a person will live and function. This was an important discovery for me as a Korean-American Christian in understanding the interplay between the dominant Confucian culture that many Koreans are raised in and the up and coming Christian worldview that one has been born again into. I understand little more clearly the importance of what Robert Webber stated, "the pressing question is: Who gets to narrate the world?"²³⁵

Discovery of "storyline" focused discipline of biblical theology and especially "faith, hope and love" paradigm of Scott Hafemann was also providential. I saw the possibility of the "storyline" of biblical theology as providing the raw material of metanarrative and began to understand that "faith, hope and love" were ideally suited to be basic building block of a metanarrative. One of the discoveries that I found particularly nourishing for my faith was recognizing that biblical faith is future driven. It is not only thankfulness for God's past provisions that I respond to that drives my faith

²³⁵ Robert Webber and Phil Kenyon, "A Call to an Ancient Evangelical Future" published on christianitytoday.com at <http://www.christianitytoday.com/go/aefcall>.

but it is also one's confident expectation, based on God's *past* track record and his character that God will continue to be faithful to me even in the future – especially in light of the truth that the *future* eschatological Kingdom of God is present now in Christ for all those who will depend and trust him, that will also drive my faith.

I realize that what I have presented in these pages is woefully inadequate. But I see them as a very rudimentary map that I've hand-drawn to get a bearing on so much change that is going on in our current ideological terrain. I have no doubt that as I travel through this terrain some parts of this rudimentary map will get clearer and sharper and more detailed, some parts will change altogether to better reflect what I have seen and experienced. But I also believe that even a rudimentary map is useful no matter how rudimentary it is, especially if you are lost in such a vast terrain and just need to get some sort of a grip.

I am especially encouraged that there are now many able guides and guidebooks available. I see that more biblical scholars are not afraid to write "storyline" driven biblical theologies from which I have no doubt that I will learn more about the beautiful contours and sharp, jagged edges, vistas and textures of biblical landscape. I am also encouraged by many books on spirituality that focus on recognizing one's story, telling one's story and listening to each other's stories. What I see as profitable is the marriage between the "storyline" of biblical theology and the spiritual theology that focuses on the "narrative" texture of one's spirituality.

Finally, my heart and prayer goes out to so many 2nd generation Korean-Americans who are caught in between stories. It is my prayer that we understand that

we are not just Koreans or Americans but are God's people who have been invited to participate in the grandest story of all – God's story.

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Vita

The author of this work is David Bonjoon Koo. Born September 19, 1969 in Seoul, Korea, he has immigrated to US in 1981, lived in New York, New Jersey area most of his life. He graduated from Rutgers University in 1993 receiving his bachelor of science degree. He graduated from Regent College in Vancouver, Canada in 1997 receiving his master of divinity. This project is present in partial fulfillment for the requirement of the Doctor of Ministry degree from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. His studies shall be completed in May, 2007.

Mr. Koo currently lives in Cliffside Park, New Jersey with his wife, Christy, and their son Ethan. He is pastor of the New Joy Fellowship Church in New York City.